CATHOLIC CHURCH:
COMMUNION OF CHURCHES

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The People of God

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Editorial

The last few decades have seen remarkable progress in ecclesiological studies. These have led us to a closer insight into the nature and structure of the Church. Hence the topic chosen for this issue of *Jeevadhara*: *The Catholic Church: Communion of Churches*. The idea of the communion of churches is generally considered a remarkable rediscovery of Vatican II, though it was an accepted truth treasured in the early traditions of the Church. The fellowship and communion among the various churches constituted the unity of the Church. The Catholic Church is a communion of Churches. It can never be reduced to a monolithic organisation of monarchical pattern. The various individual Churches which reveal their ecclesial experience and traditions in rich diversity are the best expressions of the catholicity of the Church. History teaches us that the idea of the communion of Churches was a generally accepted tradition in the first millennium. During the second millennium, however, the Roman Church followed a policy of centralization, which resulted in a monàrchical type of ecclesiastical organization. Hence the Text-books of ecclesiology contained the chapter entitled ''The Church is monarchical''! the separation between the Latin Church and the ancient Eastern Churches indirectly favoured this unilateral development. All the ecumenical Councils of the second millennium were convoked in the West.

Recent ecclesiological studies and ecumenical development have brought the Churches closer to the genuine traditions of the early Church. The time of useless polemics and acrimonious disputes is gone for ever. An atmosphere has been created where man–made accretions can be distinguished from the divine heritage of the Church of Christ. Ecclesial unity will ever remain a dream unless it is based on the authentic traditions of the early Church.

This topic is of special importance in the Indian context. The Church in India is as old as Christianity itself. Up to the sixteenth century there was only one individual Church, th~

Church of the Thomas Christians. They were almost Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and oriental in worship. The sum total of their ancient traditions was contained in the expression "the Law of Thomas". According to them they were faithfully following the law of life established by their common Father St. Thomas the Apostle. But in the sixteenth century they came in contact with the Roman form of Christianity represented by the Portuguese. The Portuguese colonizers succeeded in prevailing over the Thomas Christians. From 1599 upto 1896 Latin bishops ruled over the Eastern Church in India. Every effort to have bishops of her own traditons was labelled schism, and disastrous divisions took place during these centuries of foreign domination. The Western form of Christianity of the second millennium does not seem to have believed in unity based on the communion of Churches.

Today the Eastern Churches in India have bishops of their own ecclesial traditions. But the change of leadership did not have the desired result! Western traditons are in most cases perpetuated through formation in the seminary. An ecclesiology of this kind is a real hindrance to Christian unity. The Churches can meet together only when their identities and individualities are mutually respected. Every effort for unity undermining this basic reality will be futile.

This issue of *Jeevadhara* begins with John Berchmans' study on the New Testament vision of ecclesial unity. James Parker deals with doctrinal pluralism in the Church, while Kuncheria Pathil deals with its ecumenical implications. Xavier Koodapuzha analyses ihe idea of the communion of Churches in the Indian context. J. B. Chethimattam points out the Patristic insights into the catholicity of the Church. Varghese Pathikulangara attempts to bring home the idea of the communion of Churches according to the Syro-Malabar Liturgy.

This study is mainly intended to help towards an under-standing and appreciation of the idea of the communion of Churches. The Church in India which is as old as Christianity has to free herself from her colonial heritage and become aware of her own identity. Only in such a situation she will become mature and able to contribute to the true catholicity of the Church.

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The New Testament Vision of Ecclesial Unity

The theme of the unity of those who believe in Jesus Christ can get out of hand at any moment and turn explosive. One can quote quite a number of NT texts that categorically affirm the unity of the believing community. Those texts may make the members of the believing community very unity-conscious with whatever advantages and disadvantages this brings along with it. The unity of the believing community is written into the creed of the believing community "I believe in the ONE Church." Faith in Jesus Christ seems necessarily to tend to community. "All those who believed were together.... And day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes. They partook of food with glad and generous hearts..." (Acts 2:44, 46). The credibility of the faith of the believing community would be proportionate to the unity that is maintained among the believers. Equally important is the need of taking note of the variation of christologies, theological perspectives, dogmatic formulation, liturgical form etc. imbedded in the formative period of the N. T. itself. A correct appreciation of these varieties is a necessary qualification for our understanding of the N. T. vision of the unity of the believing community.

This paper has a limited scope. In the first part the parable of the sheepfold is considered from its causal angle. It is the hearing of the voice of the shepherd that brings the believers together.... The power of the word of the master creates unity among the disciples. In the second part attention is drawn to the pluralisms that have gone into the very formation of the N. T. The N. T. writers did not see divergent christologies, theological perspectives, dogmatic formulation etc. as a threat to the unity of faith which they held very strongly.

Unity

Unity of the sheepfold

Jesus prophesied that "there shall be one flock and one shepherd" Jn 10:16. A correct appreciation of the context of this prophecy is vital for understanding it. The saying is found in the *Paroimia* about the shepherd, the literary *genre* of which remains somewhat enigmatic (R. E. Brown, John 385).

The verse is found in an attack on the Pharisees (vv. 1, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13) who are taken as the 'shepherds' who did not enter the sheepfold through the gate (v. 1). They were strangers, from whom the sheep ran away. A certain separation characterises the relation between the shepherd and the sheep (v. 5). They are leaders who did not understand their duty for God's people, as frequently stressed by the prophets (Ezek 3:17, 34: 1-31, Js 62:6). They turned God's house, his sheepfold into a den af bandits. Under such circumstances unity of the sheepfold cannot materialise, the shepherd does not act as the principle of unity.

On the other hand the oneness of the believing community of the N. T. originates in the close relationship that is established between the sheep and the shepherd. The believing community needs a leader who leads the sheep to the pastures, "who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep without a shepherd" (Num 27:16-17; Mich 2:12-13). Here we have the unifying character of the ministry of the N. T. shepherds. The shepherd unites his flock. It is he who forms the flock into one fold. It is he who unites the crowd who are like sheep without a shepherd (Mt 6:34). The unity of the believing community flows from the shepherd's care for, and understanding of, the individual sheep, who, perhaps, go astray but are sought for, and brought back, by the shepherd (Mt 18:10-14, Lk 15:3-6). The true shepherd takes care individually of all the sheep and hence he calls them one by one (Jn 10:36).

The shepherd calls his own sheep by name, and those that are his attend to his voice (v. 3). Those who hear it are those

who belong to him (*ta idia probata*). This visualizes the situation where there are among the sheep, some who do not hear the voice of the shepherd; along with those who are attentive to it and ready to hear him (Barret, C. K. John 306). The possibility that some sheep do not belong to the shepherd need not shock us. The primitive church was quite reconciled to this dreadful possibility and made provision for those who would not believe in the gospel, and would consequently be condemned (Mc 16 : 16; Lc 7 : 29-30).

The voice of the shepherd, the principle of unity

A recurring theme in the parable of the sheepfold is this hearing the voice of shepherd. It is expressed in two ways: (i) hearing the voice (vv. 3, 16, 27); (ii) knowing the voice (vv. 4, 5). It is also negatively expressed in the affirmation that the sheep do not listen to the robber. It is through listening to the voice that the relationship is established. An attentive listening to the voice of the master is a prerequisite for oneness among the sheep.

It is the voice, the teaching of the shepherd, that creates unity among the sheep. Listening to the voice of the shepherd appears to be the principle that constitutes the group of the hearers. Those who come to Jesus to hear him are all given to him by the Father (6 : 37). To them Jesus manifested the name of the Father and in that way they are set apart from the rest of the world. They are the people who keep God's word (17 : 6). They are given by the Father to the Son (17 : 9) to be kept by him. This makes the unity of the believing community a God-given character. To hear the word of God in unity, one has to be of God. Some are incapacitated because they are not of God (8 : 47). Those who do not belong to the sheepfold are unable either to hear the word or to believe. The Jews are unable to believe, because they do not belong to the sheepfold (10 : 26). The trio of those hearing the voice of Jesus, Christ's knowing those who hear him and those who follow him is admirably expressed in 10 : 27. It is important to note that in both verses the subjects and the verbs are in the plural. The Evangelist clearly has in mind the community of those who believe in Christ. Their hearing of the word together forms them into a

group. Such hearing of the shepherd in community leads to a mutual knowledge of the shepherd and the sheep. This mutual knowledge has its prototype in the mutual knowledge that exists between the Father and the Son. According to John to know is to have eternal life (17:3) and to be saved. Such knowledge leads to freedom (8:32). Thus knowledge of Christ, in John, is almost equal to having faith (cf. 3:5, 6:69, 17:3). Knowledge of Christ implies relationship. To know Christ is to be united with him as well as with others who hear his voice. God's knowledge of Israel includes His election of them as a people and His care for them (Amos 3:2). On the part of the people, to know God implies humble obedience and trust. This mutual knowledge blossoms into a relationship of love, obedience and reciprocal acceptance. The [mutual knowledge of shepherd and sheep takes on a very clear communitarian perspective in John. The verbs that express this relationship are invariably in the second person plural. The people collectively come to know the truth and are collectively made free by the truth (8:32). Christ has given the people collectively the word that He has received from the Father. They receive it and come to know that Jesus has come from the Father (17:8). It is significant that v. 8, the sacerdotal prayer of Jesus, leads to the most powerful affirmation of the basic unity of the believing community in verse 20. Jesus' prayer embraces not only those who were sent by Him to the world (v. 18) but all those who believe in Him through the word (v. 20). Jesus' prayer for them is that they may all be one, and made one. His prayer and his word constitute those who believe in Him into a basic unity.

Unity at the local and universal level

The unity exercised at a local level under one leader, restricted ay geographical, linguistic, cultural, 'rite' considerations,— can it remain inward-looking and self-contained, failing to establish credal union with other groups professing the same faith? Genuine Christian unity should by its nature tend to blossom into the establishment of the communion of communities. The Church of God is founded not in the mere aggregate of local Churches but in their 'Koinonia'. The Ecclesia (*qahal*) of the old dispensation represented the whole community and not any part of it.

From this point of view, an independent Church appears to be a contradiction. What, or who, is it that the Church is independent of? 'Koinonia', communion, would be the watchword that is prominent in the ecclesiology apparent in the Pauline letters, and 'independence' is an idea almost foreign to them (cfr. 1 Cor 12 : 4-11; 12-26; Rom 12 : 3-8). In spite of the diversities of the primary apostolic witnesses, local communities must, in matters of faith, spontaneously identify their own essential features with those of other communities too and thus feel a basic communion with them. The leader of the local community, moved by an instinct of faith, should make his community aware of the universal communion of which it is part. A local community or group loses its credibility and witnessing value if it fails to foster the universal communion of all those who have faith in Jesus Christ. An isolated and divisive Church automatically loses its ecclesial character: it is no longer a church.

There are, in the fold, other sheep that do not yet belong to the shepherd. Christians who desire, and look for, the unity of the sheepfold, would do well to be aware of this possibility. There are those who are not of Jesus' own sheep-fold since they have not been chosen and given to him by the Father. The sheepfold in verse 16 is "Israel and it contains some who are Christ's own sheep and some (the unbelieving Jews) who are not" (Barrett John 312). This is a key verse, for our understanding of the N.T. vision of the ecclesial unity. It is a matter of divine necessity that Jesus unites all those who believe in him into a unity. Nevertheless the verse gives the impression that the message of Jesus does not intrinsically succeed in uniting all into a homogeneous group of believers. It leaves the possibility that some who resist belong to the fold. The accounts of Paul's bitter experience of regularly being rejected by the Jewish synagogue is a clear example in this respect. The word of God appears to act as a two-edged sword; it divides as well as unites the people.

There shall be one flock, one shepherd

The Greek verb (genesonthai) can be translated as 'there will be', as well as 'there shall be' both indicating a future possibility. The unity of the flock is not a naturally existing one,

but one created by Jesus among the sheep through the hearing of His voice. The unity spoken of, in the verse, is primarily a divine movement establishing a oneness between the believing Jews and the Gentiles. This primordial unity of the Church served as the blue print for the ecclesial life of future generations. The concept of unity implied in this text offers some difficulties of interpretation. The Greek words used are *poimne* and *poimen*, etymologically very close. The first should be translated rather as 'shepherd' or 'flock', and not as 'fold', as in the Vulgate. Probably Jerome's translation (fold) is based on a Greek text that had '*aule*' instead of *poimne*. What is implied in translating *poimne* as 'shepherd', 'flock', is the unity of those who go after Christ hearing His voice (and certainly not those who are confined within the four walls of a 'fold'). The first translation leads more readily to a notion of the ecclesial unity as dynamic, and the second to a static one. On the other hand the text does not seem to admit of the interpretation offered by Bernard J. H. (Jn II, 363) that what Jesus wanted was one flock even if it lived in many folds. Such an interpretation looks anachronistic and seems to be motivated by the existing fact of divided Christianity. The text understood, in its context, cannot be, in any way, used to legitimize its divisions existing among the believing communities. It can only be legitimately interpreted as the fostering of the unity of all those who 'hear the voice', of the shepherd. To remain outside the flock is infidelity to the divine action that brings in the other sheep that hear the voice of the shepherd. The unity of the flock is based on the uniqueness of the shepherd; the flock has to be one as there is only one shepherd.

Unity is the very quality of those who go to Christ, and division and schism are signs of its very reverse. The unity of the hearers of the voice of the shepherd is a dimension natural to the believers. Above all it is a spiritual dimension; it is a unity of the spirit in a bond of peace (Eph. 4 : 3). The inner unity of the Church should be manifested outwardly. This manifestation is not a mere externalization but a visible sign, a guarantee of its inner dynamic unity. The sign value of the external unity provides the necessary credibility to the unifying capacity of the word of God. One may run the risk of depend-

ing too heavily on the external manifestation of the unity, but the stress should be on the spiritual principle of unification.

Pluralism

Pluralism must be felt at different levels in the very constitution of the Church. Convergence of divergent streams of theology seems to lay at the very foundation of the Christian community. The divergence in Christologies, in theological perspectives, dogmatic formulations etc. are to be taken as a prototype of the pluralism possible for the future believing communities.

Paul's christology and gospel writing

It is generally admitted that Paul offers a christology which is basically a simple soteriology: "It pleased God to save those who believe.... we proclaim Christ who has been crucified.... a Christ who is God's power and God's wisdom" (cfr. 1 Cor 1 : 21-25). It affirms that Jesus our Lord was handed over to die for our transgressions and was raised for our justification (Rom 4 : 25). This basic soteriological christology is central to Paul's theology. He was not concerned about the constitution of Christ intrinsically. He preached Christ crucified, 'crucified' almost becoming a title. Paul's gospel (Rom 2 : 16, 16 : 26; 2 Tim 2 : 8, my gospel Rom 2 : 16; 16 : 25; 2 Tim 2 : 8; Gal 1 : 8; 11, 22; our gospel 1 Thes 1 : 5; II Thes 2 : 14; II Cor. 4 : 3 - Cfr. 1 Cor 15: 1) hinges upon another functional title namely 'risen'. Here we find christology in its earliest and simplest form. This christology Paul considers his own.

In such a scheme Jesus' earthly life and ministry has no significant position. No doubt Paul refers to Jesus' Davidic descent according to the flesh (Rom 1 : 3; 2 Tim 2 : 8) in contrast to Jesus' becoming Son of God according to the spirit of holiness (Rom 1 : 4), and Jesus' birth from a woman (Gal 4 : 4). But he is definitely not interested in developing these themes. He refers to them only as already fixed in credal formulas. His 'gospel' was not proclaimed in the form of stories about what Jesus said and did. On the contrary it was a christology of salvation brought about by the manifestation of God's power in Jesus' resurrection prepared by His death. Although Paul accepts

the incarnation as part of the salvific process (Phil 2 : 7; II Cor 8 : 9), he is interested in it only as a prelude to the passion, death and resurrection, where Jesus' total obedience is fully manifested (Rom 5 : 19; Phil 2 : 8). The content of his 'gospel' is above all Jesus the Christ, the risen, the 'kyrios' of all men. Paul witnesses to further formulations of the faith of the early churches in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in which he instructed those who were seeking faith: "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3-7). Through that formula Paul stresses the soteriological role of Christ among men. This christology vividly presents the belief of Pauline communities of that constitutive period. Paul himself does not seem to have known a "more developed" christology or thought it necessary to have a better christology. His insistence on the exclusive character of 'his gospel' (Gal 1 : 8) may be indicative of the absence of other christologies in that period.

A tremendous step forward in the christological understanding of the Church was the decision of the evangelist Mark to write a gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God (Mc 1 : 1). According to an ancient tradition quoted by Papias of Hierapolis, Mark became Peter's interpreter. He wrote down accurately, although not in order, all that he remembered of what the Lord had said or done. Mark himself had not heard or followed the Lord, but later heard and followed Peter who used to adapt his teaching to the needs of the moment, without making any sort of arrangement of the Lord's oracles (Cfr. Eusebius, H. E. 3. 39). Whatever may be the historical exactitude of this testimony, one thing stands out clearly in the statement. The first attempt to write a gospel was undertaken not by a disciple of the Lord Himself but by a disciple of the second generation, namely a disciple of Peter. Apparently the work was undertaken by a person who was otherwise unimportant in the Church, and certainly not by a person like Paul who wielded extraordinary influence in the expanding church. Such a person presenting a christology which is basically different in perspective from Paul's is a powerful affirmation of the possibility of pluralism in the theology of the early Church.

According to the testimony of Papias referred to above, Mark wrote "accurately, although not in order". What does this accuracy and simultaneous lack of order come to ? According

to an early form of 'kerygma' preserved in Acts 10:37–39, 'after the baptism which John preached God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power and he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil'. We see, in Mark's gospel, how this ministerial christology, expressed in Acts 10:37-39, gained further specifications. Gospel writing, initiated by Mark, established a christology based on geographical specifications (cfr. the summary passages in Mc 1: 14-15, 21-22, 39; 2:13; 3:76-9; 6:7, 12-13, 20). Accordingly, the following division of Jesus' ministry based on geographical delineation can be easily detected in the second Gospel. The Galilean ministry (1:14 – 3:6); the height of Galilean ministry (3:7 – 6:13), the ministry beyond Galilee (6:14 – 8:26), from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem (8:27 – 10:52), the ministry in Jerusalem (11:1 – 13:37), the Passion and Resurrection (14:1 – 16:8). Objections to this division arise from the fact that the events mentioned in 6:14 – 8:26 did not all take place beyond Galilee (see esp. 6:34, 35; 7:31, 8:10, 22). Apart from this fact, the general assumption of the movement of Jesus' ministry from Galilee ending in Jerusalem is obvious. In this presentation what was said to have been begun in Galilee (Acts 10:37) is brought to a glorious end in Jerusalem.

Along with this geographical structure, Mark's Gospel shows how Jesus' miracles pointed to his true identity as the Messiah and how He consequently commanded faith and discipleship. All the same he was only misunderstood by the Pharisees (3:6), by his own relatives (6:1 – 6a) and even by his disciples (8:17-21, 27-30). In this ministerial christology, the ministry is the revelation of Jesus' true identity; what he was, was manifested through what he said and did. The geographical as well as the theological structures together give Mark's narrative about Jesus the form of his Gospel.

From "gospel of the Lord" to the gospels

Luke, the author of the third gospel, was not a prominent figure in the Apostolic Church. No doubt, Christian tradition identified him as Paul's "beloved physician" (Col 4:14), but he was neither a disciple nor an eye-witness to Jesus' earthly life. Under the circumstances, the fact that Luke undertook the writing

of a gospel different from Mark's a copy of which he certainly made use of, in all likelihood, lets us assume theological pluralism in that constitutive period. He uses the then existing sources, respectfully but never slavishly, respect for what has been established, but freedom for what should still be known, about Christ.

The Lucan prologue begins with the word *epeideper* meaning "with reference to the fact already well known". The well-known fact was that many narratives about the things that were accomplished by Jesus Christ were in circulation. What the "many" tried was the tradition of accounts by means of which known facts were handed down.

Unlike the credal formulas in Paul, what was in circulation among Luke's readers was "an account" (*diegesis*) of Jesus' words and deeds. *Diegesis* lays more stress on the historical nature of the facts narrated. Luke insists that what he writes about really happened. The verb that Luke uses here (*plerophorein*) points to a completion, totality (cfr Lc 7:1, 9:31, 22:16). It refers to the totality of, what Jesus said and did. The christology of Paul would not have attempted to make a claim of this sort. In Luke's conception, the Christ event came to its conclusion in Jesus' death and resurrection (cfr Lc 9:31) But the events of Jesus' earthly life too should necessarily be integrated to it (cfr Acts 1:21f, 10:38-39). Lc himself does not pretend to be an eye witness to what Jesus did and said, but claims that the facts of Jesus' ministry, what he said and did, were handed over to him and others by faithful witnesses. Reference to the handing down of tradition makes Luke's narrative more historically orientated.

Lc proposes to write his account of Jesus, "after following up all things carefully". At the beginning of Acts Lc explicitly mentions what he did in the first: I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach (Acts 1:1). This meant collection of material and their orderly presentation. He proposed to write his 'account' after "having followed all things" and of "all that Jesus began to do and teach". Lc's interest was in a comprehensive christology, total christology. This certainly points towards the theological pluralism that was possible in that period.

Lc's investigation of the facts regarding the account he is about to present is extended to things that happened right at the beginning. What happened right at the beginning was the ministry of John the Baptist (cfr Acts 10:37). Lc goes even a step further and provides us with information regarding the circumstances of the birth and infancy of John. He certainly felt the responsibility for offering an orderly account of Jesus' words and deeds, different from that of Paul, who does not go beyond some credal affirmation in this regard, as referred above. In fact this is applicable to all those who wrote particular gospels, the effect of each work boiling down to the presentation of a christology that is different from that of Paul. Such a christology was certainly controlled by the apostolic preaching, however not limited by it. The apostolic preaching about Christ admitted the possibility of an expanded christology.

Varieties of ministries in the Pauline corpus

'Pauline corpus' is used here to mean both the letters that are certainly Paul's, like the Epistles to the Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, etc. and those whose authorship is in dispute. Among the latter the pastorals (I & II Tim and Titus) form a special group. From the point of view of hierarchical and charismatic ministries in the Church, the two groups seem to be governed by opposite dynamics, the pastorals by elements of hierarchical structuring and the Pauline letters by a charismatic dynamics.

The Pastorals are adressed to individuals in charge of local churches: to Timothy who was in charge of the Church in Ephesus and to Titus who occupied the same position in the Church of Crete. A few serious arguments are brought foreward to question the traditionally held Pauline authorship of these letters. According to one, the stage of organization in the Christian communities mentioned in the Pastorals is that of the early second century. This may be too simplistic a view. First of all it is not true to say that the Pastorals provide a fully developed ecclesiastical organisation as we have it in Ignatius of Antioch. According to his letters who was martyred around 107 A. D., the local communities were under the direction of a single bishop. Subordinate to him was a group of presbyters and deacons unde

them. The Pastorals in fact do not make a sharp distinction between the three grades. No doubt, the impression given is that episcopal powers were still exercised by Paul personally or by his delegate, Timothy, in Ephesus and Titus, in Crete (1 Tim. 3: 1-13). Along with the bishop, there is also a group of *presbyteroi*, who are also called *episcopi* (cf. Tim. 1: 5, 7). The presence of deacons too in local communities is in evidence (1 Tim 3: 8-10). The impression one gets is that of the presence of a nascent hierarchical set-up in those communities. This is confirmed also from *Acts* and from Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul, in Miletus, sends for the elders (presbyteroi) of the Church in Ephesus. The presbyteroi of Ephesus appear to be the leaders of that community. They seem to be the leaders designated by the apostles and fairly well represented in a number of local churches (cf. Acts 11: 30, 14: 23, 15: 2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 20: 17, 21: 18). The fact that they are always mentioned in the plural suggests that they constituted a group or a college in the local communities. In Acts 20: 28, without implying a difference of meaning, the presbyteroi of verse 17 are given the name episcopoi. The situation, in this regard, seen in Philip 1: 1 agrees to what has been said so far. Among those who write the letter to the Philippians, after Paul we find Timothy, a group of bishops and deacons. The inference is clear. Even during the ministry of Paul some officials, with the names of *episcopoi*, *presbyteroi*, *diakonoi* were already in charge of some of the local communities, although their inter-relationship was not sharply distinguished. Attention has to be paid to the fact that in the Pastorals, the author seems to presuppose the existence of an ordination ceremony, the visible sign of which was the imposition of hands that communicated authority and responsibility to the recipient of the ecclesiastical office (Tim. 4: 14, II Tim. 1: 6). Both the presbyterate as a college (I Tim. 4: 14) and Paul personally are said to have ordained Timothy to the episcopal office.

It is instructive, now, to turn to the ecclesiastical set-up that can be found in the genuine Pauline letters. As a starting-point one may assume that the hierarchical set-up that we have noticed in the Pastoral, consisting of the trio of episcopoi, presbyteroi and diakonoi, is nowhere visible except perhaps implicitly in the title of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul certainly exercised 'episcopical' authority in the Churches he

founded (cf. I Cor 5: 3). On the other hand there were people who exercised a number of other ministries in the Church. The possible ministries mentioned are gifts, services, works, utterances of wisdom, utterances of knowledge, expression of faith, gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecies, discernment of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues (I Cor. 12: 4-10), teaching, exhorting, giving aid, acts of mercy (Rom. 12: 5-8). Along with these ministries, Paul provides us with a list of spirit-filled ministers who may have been functioning in the local communities, such as: apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, leaders, helpers, administrators, speakers in various tongues (I Cor. 12: 28), evangelists, pastors (Eph. 4: 11). It is worth noting that in I Cor. 12: 28 and Eph 4: 11 the office of the apostle' is given the first place. In this set up there is no evidence of the existence of the ruling authority in the ministers in Corinth. One need not assume that the specific character of the offices like prophets or teachers in the Pauline Churches of elsewhere was clear. They are mentioned together in Acts 13: 1. They do not appear to be a well-defined church office (cf. also Eph 4: 1, 1 Tim. 2: 7, II Tim 1: 11, 4: 3, Heb. 5: 12, James 3: 1). Again, the chief apostles are said to have prophetic powers. Peter speaks in the power of the spirit (Acts 2: 4, 4: 8) and has the power to read hearts (Acts. 5: 3 ff and 9). The purpose of Paul's conversion is to make him a light to the nations (Acts 9: 15, 13: 47), a prophetic ministry that is in line with the prophetic ministry of Jesus himself (Lc 2: 32). Stephen is filled with the Holy Spirit (6: 5) whose wisdom his enemies could not withstand (6: 10). However it should be noted that none of them was called a prophet. Those who are called prophets (Agabus 11: 27f; 21: 10, Judas and Silas 15: 32, daughters of Philip 21: 9) do not hold any church office. What has to be noted is the presence of all these characters in the early church. One should attempt an organic blending of all of them. It should be noted here that no mention is made of any ordination rite in Paul's letters and no mention of a priesthood with cultic powers or ecclesiastical authority. The one Christian attitude that is prevalent in the Pauline letters is that of diakonia: that of service. More than an office it is understood as the attitude that leadership should necessarily exercise in the communities. The one attitude that is specified for

the individual of the Christian community is diakonia. Hence the diakonia that was part of the ecclesiastical office in the Pastorals becomes a charism, a grace, in the Pauline letters.

Can we establish a comparison between the two types of Church organisation, namely communities guided by bishops, presbyters and deacons on the one hand, and on the other, communities whose leadership rested in the apostles, evangelists, prophets, teachers, healers, administrators, etc. For Paul it should seem, apostolate was charism *par excellence* and the first of the charisms. The necessity of becoming an apostle came first of all from Jesus Christ through the action of His Spirit (Gal. 1: 11, 12). In this perspective it is the Spirit that is the guarantee of the apostleship and not any commissioning by the community. It is interesting in this connection to note that there is no mention of such a ceremony in any of the genuine Pauline letters guaranteeing the office of an apostle, prophet, evangelist, etc. This is perhaps because of Paul's own conviction that he is urged to be an apostle by the spirit within rather than by any external force. The episcopal office of the Pastorals would correspond to the charism of the apostleship of the Pauline letters.

The points of contact between the two lists seem to end there. Should we necessarily suppose that the episcopal, presbyteral and diakonal offices of the Pastorals exercised also the charisms mentioned in the Pauline letters? Not likely. They seem to represent two ecclesial dimensions of the early Church. Paul gives us the impression that along with him, and in collaboration with the charism of his apostolate, the rest of the leadership in the local churches were exercised by men who were charismatically authenticated. A clear understanding of the spirit of the ecclesial set-up of the Pauline Churches would enable us to give a rightful place to the spirit-led people in the life of our ecclesial communities. What has been said about the two types of ecclesial set-up of the Pastoral and Pauline letters is no legitimization of the assumption of the existence of a charismatic Church as opposed to the hierarchical Church, among the communities of Paul's time. Such a sharp distinction probably never existed in the Pauline communities, namely a purely hierarchical

Church or a genuinely charismatic Church that was somehow
not guided by the hierarchical set-up. Paul himself seems to
have claimed authority over the Churches not on the merits of
his charism but because James and Cephas and John, who were
reputed to be pillars, gave him the right of fellowship (Gal 2 : 9),
namely the fellowship of the apostolate. However, the two lines
of leadership in the Church should not be neglected. Neither
aspects should be exaggerated to the detriment of the other.
A genuine pluralism in this matter would certainly contribute to
the internal unity of the Church, and its consequent growth.
The prediominent role of the Spirit in Acts on the one hand
and the marks of the beginning of a hierarchical structuring in
the pastorals on the other hand should make for an understand-
ing of the Church in which both of these elements are organi-
cally blended together.

Conclusion

Christ wished that the Church should be one; he prayed
for this unity. It is not some quality extrinsically added to the
Church. The very nature of the believing community implies be-
ing united in hearing the Word of God. The Church is the
assembly of the people of God who hear the Word together. She is
the voice of the Shepherd, the Master, who creates the unity
among her hearers. The oneness created by the Word among its
hearers is not a monolith. The witnesses of the early traditions
did not take it that way. All of them understood that faith in
Jesus Christ was one, but they did not hesitate to express this
faith in different ways in that constitutive period. Difference do
not seem to have been merely tolerated but to have been appre-
ciated as legitimate ways of expressing the same faith. Paul
apparently knew from his predecessors only a simple christology
based on the soteriological dimensions of the death and glorifi-
cation of Christ. He did not elaborate or look for a better or
more developed Christology. A tremendous step forward was taken
by Mark's decision to write a gospel narrative made up of more
details of what Jesus said and did during his ministry. Luke led
this theological reflection further. He ventured upon a detailed
"account of everything that happened" regarding Jesus. The details

of that account constitute the elements of a more developed Christology. Lastly, already within the Pauline corpus, one notices the elements of pluralism in the matter of ministries in the Church. If the Pastorals witness the existence of the hierarchically structured ministries, the Pauline Letters seem to show, besides Paul's authority the charismatic form of ministries in the Church. We should not think of a Church governed exclusively by any one of these forms, but both perspectives should be given due importance in our theological reflections as well as in the life of the Church. The NT vision of the Church is that the Church is a community of those who hear the Word of God together and may experience and express it in diversified forms.

Bethany Ashram   John Berchmans
Kottayam – 10

Doctrinal Pluralism

"Pluralism" is a key word in today's vocabulary. It is used by sociologists and theologians alike. Sociologists note that contemporary man, at least in *Western-style* democracies, lives in a pluralistic world. [1] This world is a market place of experiences, ideas, belief systems, and organizations. And in this market place, we have new and extraordinary freedom and responsibility for what happens to us, for our vision of life, for our associations, and even for our culture.

Theologians observe that the contemporary Catholic Christian lives in a pluralistic world. [2] Theology has yielded to a host of theologies. Thanks to the biblical, liturgical and patristic revivals of the early twentieth century, as well as to the influence of a variety of contemporary philosophies and social sciences, there is a rich diversity of theological approaches. This diversity has raised the question of doctrinal pluralism in controversies such as those concerning the person of Christ, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the demythologization of Scripture, and the infallibility of the Pope. At the very time when the barriers that run between churches have been breaking down, pluralism seems to have been re-aligning and dividing Christians within their denominations. [3]

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1. This article deals with pluralism as a new phenomenon in Western culture and Christian theology, merely noting that pluralism is a much more ancient phenomenon in the culture, philosophy and religion of India.

2. See, for example, the proceedings of the Louvain colloquium in 1972, publised as *Pluralisme, Polarisation et Communication Dans L'Eglise*. (Brussels: *Pro Mundi Vita*, 1973).

3. In addition to the theological and doctrinal pluralism manifest in the "elder" churches, there has been significant pluralism in the "younger" churches of what were once mission lands.

I. The problem of pluralism

Pluralism, then, is a fact. It is also a problem. So much of a problem, that Karl Rahner, when assigned the task of suggesting an agenda for Pope Paul's newly created International Commission of theologians, reported that the first and most urgent question was how to defend and preach a faith that is one when there is no unity in theology. [4]

This problem is a crucial one. Christianity would be an illusion if it could not show forth both continuity with the past and unity in the present. [5] The task for a Newman of the nineteenth century was to demonstrate that the Church of Pius IX, despite all appearances of fundamental change, was indeed the Church of the Fathers. [6] The challenge for theologians of the twentieth century is to show how faith, in spite of manifest pluralism, is indeed one. Just as Newman constructed a theory of development to account for the difficulty of what we may call diachronic pluralism, so theologians today construct hypotheses to account for synchronic pluralism. [7]

Rahner's charge to theologians facing the problem of pluralism was to examine the distinction that is more and more frequently made between a certain unity of faith and of creed on the one hand, and a pluralism of theology on the other. [8] Rahner acknowledged that that distinction is difficult to make without breaking the link that there must always be between faith and theology. [9] The troublesome link is the *ensemble* of doctrines and

4. This address has been publishd as "Problèmes théologiques urgents," *IDOC-International*, 13, (1969), 45-62.

5. Michel de Certeau, "Is There a Language of Unity?" *Concilium*, 1 (1970), p. 79.

6. See, for example, O. S. Dessain, (ed.), *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1962), p. 32.

7. John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, Inc., 1968), p. 30.

8. Rahner, "Problèmes théologiques urgents," p. 56.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

creeds. These are articulations of faith and, at the same time, products of theology. If unity is located in faith and if pluralism characterizes theology, what can we say of doctrine ? What is the normativeness of doctrine ? Can there be a doctrinal pluralism ?

It is the purpose of this article to try to answer these questions in the light of writings on pluralism by the Canadian philosopher and theologian, Bernard J. F. Lonergan. [10] His theory regarding the sources of pluralism and the unity of faith is especially interesting inasmuch as it is primarily methodological in nature. If, as has been suggested here, pluralism is as much a matter of culture as of theology, it would seem that a methodological rather than a strictly theological approach to the question would be valuable.

II. The unity of faith in religious experience

At a first reading it seems that Lonergan casts his net wider. Though he makes a distinction between faith and theology, [11] more basic to his approach is the fact that he draws a distinction between religious experience and religious expression. There is, indeed, a unity of faith, and this unity is rooted in the experience of religious conversion. [12] At the same time there is diversity in the expression of this faith, a diversity that is due to the various cultures in which men live, and to the varying measure in which their consciousness is differentiated. [13] As long as diverse expressions, whether doctrinal or theological, manifest religious as well as consequent moral and intellectual conversion,

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10. These writings may be found in Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 271-280 and pp. 326-329 (hereinafter cited as *MIT*), and in Bernard Lonergan, *Doctrinal Pluralism* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1971).

11. *MIT*, pp. 138-139.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

13. *Ibid.*

their pluralism is legitimate and enriching. [14] Only to the extent that they exhibit a lack of those conversions is their pluralism radical and perilous.

This distinction between religious experience and religious expression is comparable to the distinction between meaning and expression that is, in one fashion or another, necessitated by history and commonplace in theology today. [15] What is unique to Lonergan is that the unity of meaning is identified as a unity rooted in religious experience, the experience of conversion.

A. Religious experience

Religious experience is a matter of religious conversion. To understand what Lonergan means by religious conversion it is necessary to review his anthropology briefly. According to it man, thanks to his questioning, has by nature a capacity for going beyond himself, for self-transcendence. He strives for what is *real* and for what is *valuable*; that is, for what is beyond appearances (what seem to me to be), and for what is beyond desires and fears, satisfactions and preferences (what seems to me to be good). He can always ask a further question about what is real and always pursue the greater value.

If man has by nature this capacity, then it is not within his nature that this capacity be fulfilled. Conscious intentionality is oriented, in other words, to fulfilment that is beyond its reach. Any knowledge and value that were beyond question, or without condition, would not be the product of man's knowing and valuing, but would come to him as gift.

Since fulfilment has to be received rather than attained, it would constitute in man an about face. Such an about-face is what Lonergan means by conversion [16] The value that fulfils

14. *Ibid*. Religious conversion leads to moral and intellectual conversions. For these conversions and for how they are dimensions of a single process, see below, section C.

15. See, for example, B. Sesboüé, "Autorité de magistère et vie de foi ecclésiale," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 93 (1971), p. 348.

16. *MIT*, pp. 237-238.

man's quest for self-transcendence, taking him to what is within his capacity but not within his achievement, constitutes religious conversion.

Religious conversion is thus a matter of being grasped by value that is beyond measure. It consists in otherworldly falling in love, "otherworldly" referring to that which is without question or condition, and "falling in love" referring to the fact that such love, far from being set up by knowledge and choice, is a gift in which one finds himself.

B.   Faith

Religious conversion, then, is God's love flooding men's hearts. That love, rather than following upon knowledge, is a love that knows. In other words, it is not blind, contrary to a recent and Western prejudice that all love is blind. Love has its eye and that eye is faith. [17]   Or, in another expression used by Lonergan, faith is knowledge born of religious love. [18]

Lonergan explains this in terms of Pascal's dictum that the heart has reasons which reason doesn't know. [19]   The heart, or the person on the existential level of consciousness, has those "reasons" which are intentional feeling responses to values. These "reasons" are not those of reason, which is the compound of experiencing, understanding, and judging activities. All the same, as responses that involve discernment they constitute knowledge.

Why would faith perceive believing to be a value? Because the apprehension of God, though personal, is not solitary. It can occur in many persons, and what occurs in many can be discovered by them as the common orientation of their lives. From common communion with God can spring community, and community invites expression. And so there result the commands that enjoin love of God, the counsels that guide asceticism and mysticism, the narratives that tell the story of God's dealing with His people, and the theoretical discourses that expound His goodness and designs.

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17.   *Ibid,,* p. 117.
18.   *Ibid.,* p. 115.
19.   *Ibid.*

Beliefs, then, multiply, but behind their multiplicity and divergencies there is that single and common faith, born of unconditional love, that perceives the value of these beliefs.

C. The Unity of Faith

Lonergan conceives of the unity of faith as being in religious conversion, i. e., in the acceptance of the gift of God's love. "The real root and ground of unity is being in love with God — the fact that God's love has flooded our inmost hearts through the Holy Spirit he has given us (Rom. 5 : 5).[21] The eye of such religious love is faith. And so, the unity *of* faith means unity *in* faith.

The alternative, according to Lonergan, is to conceive of the unity of faith as a matter of subscribing to correct formulae.[22] This conception prevailed when people saw culture as one and consequently could hold their apprehensions of God's revelation to be normative. This conception of the unity of faith is impossible now that we are aware of the historicity of our thought and expression. Moreover, it was wrong. For even if the unity of faith appeared and was declared to be a matter of subscribing to correct formulae, such was only the "shabby shell of Catholicism."[23] The real unity *of* faith has always been *in* faith.

More exactly, the unity of faith has been *rooted* in faith; i.e., *rooted* in religious conversion. What is rooted, however, should flower, and unity of faith rooted in religious conversion should flower into a full unity of faith found in moral and intellectual conversions. These conversions beg explanation.

Moral conversion, first of all, is a change in the criterion of our decisions and choices. If that criterion was satisfaction, moral conversion makes it value. Lonergan contends that the state of total being-in-love with God ordinarily causes such moral conversion to follow in its wake. For, falling in love unconditionally gives one a cosmic purpose and context that enables him to accept the suffering involved in adhering to values.

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21. *Ibid.,* p. 327.   22. *Ibid.*   23. *Ibid.*

Intellectual conversion, in the second instance, is a radical and relatively rare break from myths to the truth about what constitutes human knowing. [24] Just as religious conversion can lead to moral conversion, so moral conversion can lead to intellectual conversion. For moral conversion, arming one against various biases, can determine whether one remains in harmony with the austere demands of the intellect. Without the moral conversion that maintains one in fidelity to the demands of the intellect, one might be satisfied, for example, with a notion of knowing that is mythical (knowing is looking) and of reality as something palpable (the real is what one can touch). Following the norms revealed in the very exercise of knowing, the intellect must come to acknowledge that knowing is a compound of experiencing, understanding, and judging and that the real is whatever is so known.

The absence of intellectual conversion makes of men and women empiricists, naive realists, and idealists. Each inhabits quite different realms of meaning. One person never means what the other does when they discuss the validity of a theory, the nature of a fact, or the status of a myth.

Most of Lonergan's examples of pluralism resulting from the absence of conversion have to do with intellectual conversion. He notes that the combination of undifferentiated consciousness and lack of intellectual conversion results in fundamentalism. [25] Karl Barth's fideism and Rudolph Bultmann's secularist notion of exegesis are both traced to lack of intellectual conversion. [26]

The importance of intellectual conversion, for Lonergan, is most evident in his reflections on Christian realism. [27] There

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24. Intellectual conversion is the self-appropriation that Lonergan attempts to bring about in the readers of his epistemological works such as *Insight*, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1957.

25. Lonergan, *Doctrinal Pluralism*, pp. 38-39. For undifferentiated consciousness see below, Section III.

26. *MIT*, p. 318.

27. Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1974), pp. 239-261.

is an epistemology, and, consequently, a metaphysics, implicit in Christian revelation. The epistemology is that of realism. Revelation, can make one a realist. Not, of course, an explicit realist, since most Christians never undertake the philosophizing that such realism, whether "naive" or "critical," requires, but, an implicit or "dogmatic" realist. Now, an implicit or "dogmatic" realist is one who would agree with the critical realist on the nature of knowing if he were capable of, and successful in, philosophical reflection. Much pluralism seems inevitable, given the difficulty of going from dogmatic to critical realism. That path is through the traps of naive realism, empiricism, and idealism. The unity of the Church is shored up by the dogmatic realism of its members; some of the radical pluralism in the Church is owing to the inability of some of its members to come to critical realism, the position of the intellectually converted.[28]

D. Christian conversion ?

At this point, a serious question arises: Is the unity of Christian faith a matter of religious conversion having come to fullness in the dimensions of moral and intellectual conversion ? Or, is the unity of Christian faith rooted in a specifically Christian conversion that may or may not flower into fullness in subsequent moral and intellectual conversions ?

If the former is true, then either (1) all religious expression is equally valid and equally invalid, depending on the presence of moral and intellectual conversion; or, (2) Christian, and, indeed, Catholic expression of faith is normative because it alone expresses the fullness of threefold conversion.

Such implications pull us up short and direct us back to an "if" clause that follows hard upon Lonergan's insistence that unity of faith is unity *in* faith. He says that *if* religious conversion is Christian, then it has an intersubjective, interpersonal component, so that besides the gift of the Spirit within, there is

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28. This thesis is comparable to that of Jacques Maritain, *Trois Réformateurs* (Paris Librarie Plon, 1925), pp 49 ff., who maintains that Luther's reformation rests on a pessimistic epistemology.

the outward encounter with Christian witness. This Christian witness is the kerygma whose normativeness comes from its constituting the outward word of God.

Though Lonergan is ambiguous and his commentators divided on this question of the existence of a specifically Christian conversion, [29] it would seem best, at least for the purposes of this investigation, to say that the unity of Christian faith is rooted in Christian conversion. Then, after looking into the sources of legitimate pluralism, we can proceed to the problem of verifying that unity of faith.

III. The pluralism of religious expression

The spontaneous manifestation of the religious experience of conversion is a radical peace and deep-set joy. [30] Beyond this "harvest of the Spirit," however, there is the religious expression of symbol, art, and word. This expression is manifold, varying not only from one culture to another, but also according to the degree that consciousness is differentiated in individuals and in the more general history of human thought.

Pluralism of expression, then, is owing to two sources. First, the faithful find themselves within different cultural horizons, each providing a distinctive manner of apprehending and expressing truth. Secondly, the faithful, even within the same culture, are of variously developed or differentiated consciousnesses.

A.   Cultural diversity

According to conventional wisdom, people live, breathe, and have their being within various cultures. These cultures are simply *there*, and though people can cross over borders, they can never enter fully into the perspective of another culture. In the

29. The reason for this ambiguity is that Lonergan mentions Christian conversion only after making his distinction between religious experience and expression. The key text suggesting the reality of Christian conversion is found in *MIT*, p. 119.

30. *MIT*, p. 108.

final reckoning, people live in isolated worlds and pluralism is irreducible.

In view of this conventional wisdom, Lonergan is an optimist. To be sure, cultural standpoints differ. But, if we can explain how those different standpoints come about, then we can hold forth the promise of bridging them and of being enriched rather than isolated by pluralism.

Cultures, first of all, are sets or patterns of meanings and values that are present in ways of life and manifested in the daily work and play of the artist, the statesman, the house-wife and the mythical "man in the street".[31] Whence, then, do such sets of meanings and values come ? Lonergan's answer is that they come from multiple acts of intelligence.

The acts of intelligence that create cultures are, however, acts of common sense. Common sense, as defined by Lonergan, judges an object as it relates immediately to the subject rather than as it relates to some other and mediating object or instrument. Thus, for example, common sense observes that "it feels very cold outside", rather than judging that it is 30° F; or in the famous example adduced by the scientist Eddington, that this table is a matter of solid and dark wood, rather than an almost empty space inhabited by colorless atoms in continuous motion.[32] Common sense grasps data in their relationship to us *(quoad nos)* rather than in their interrelationships *(quoad se)*, and makes use of descriptive rather than technical language.

Since common sense is under the sway of the subject, there are as many brands of common sense as there are instances of "us". This pluralism of common sense generates cultural diversity.

But, if consciousness is polymorphic, as Lonergan maintains, we are not limited to the common sense mode of operation. We can, so to speak, "go behind" the differences in the worlds of common sense so that what is cold for me and warm for you

31.   *Ibid.*, p. 301.
32.   *Ibid.*, p. 274.

is 30° F by mutual agreement. The movement from common sense to theoretical understanding is a transcultural movement. Thus, just as there is a theoretical understanding of thermodynamics that is applicable in Portland and in Bangalore, so there is a theoretical understanding of Jesus' relationship to the Father (expressed in the Athanasian confession that everything said of the Father is said of the Son except the name Father) that transcends the manifold diversity of cultural affirmations such as that Jesus is the Son of Man (late Jewish apocalyptic), the Servant (early Jewish Christian) and the Logos (later Hellenic Christian).

Much of theological pluralism, then, results from obeying the Gospel injunction to go forth to all nations and peoples. Such pluralism is necessary if we are to announce, with the resources of each culture, what hasn't been proclaimed in that culture: the message of salvation. [33]

Thus, for example, *ruah*, *pneuma*, and *atman* are not just synonymous words, but three different concepts reflecting the diversity of Hebrew, Greek, and Indian horizons. [34] Again, there is a Petrine theology found mainly in the Synoptics, which emphasizes the humanity of Jesus and which is most characteristic of the Roman Church's spirituality; a Pauline theology, which emphasizes the crucified and cosmic Christ, and which is most characteristic of the spirituality of the Protestant churches; and, a Johannine theology, which emphasizes the exalted Jesus and which is most characteristic of the spirituality of the Orthodox churches. [35] And, to take two final examples, there are Antiochian and Alexandrine Christologies and the Eastern economic and Western psychological theologies of the Trinity. [36]

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33. *Ibid.* p. 300.

34. Daniélou, "Unité pluralité de la pensée chrétienne" pp. 4-5.

35. Dejaifve, "Diversité dogmatique et unité de la révélation," p. 20.

36. Gerard Philips, "A propos du pluralisme en theologic," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 46 (1970), 155-157.

B. Differentiations of consciousness

There are not only many cultures, but within each culture there are individuals whose consciousness has been developed in varying ways and to varying degrees. These differentiations of consciousness constitute realms of meaning and result in a good deal of synchronic pluralism. [37]

Though it is a commonplace to observe that there are different ways of looking at something, it is a unique contribution of Lonergan's to ground these ways of looking at things in a polymorphic but single consciousness. Again, he is the optimist. The pluralism that results in a church in which the faithful are inclined to common sense, theoretical, interior as well as artistic, mystical, and a host of other differentiations of consciousness are not divisive. In the person of fully differentiated consciousness, all this expressive pluralism is seen as it truly is complementary and enriching.

In fact, neither the pluralism resulting from different cultures nor the pluralism due to various differentiations of consciousness involves any divergence of meaning. Such pluralism is primarily a matter of communications of expression. [39] Many different modes of speech can still be *in eodem dogmate, eodem sensu eademque sententia.* [40] Bridges can be built from one culture to another and people can achieve the differentiations of consciousness that unite them to others. Despite the puzzling character of such pluralism, it is benign; in fact, far from being a threat to the unity of faith, such pluralism witnesses to faith's vitality inasmuch as doctrines that are vitally assimilated bear the stamp of those who assimilate them. [41]

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37. These differentiations of consciousness, arranged successively in the lives of individuals and of peoples, set up in history various *stages* of meaning, and these stages explain what is called diachronic pluralism or the development of doctrine.

39. *MIT,* p. 276.

40. *Ibid.,* p. 329.

41. *Ibid.,* pp. 300–301.

IV. The role of doctrines

One criterion for a theory regarding pluralism is that it provide some means for verifying the unity of faith. Immediately, doctrines come to mind as that means. But which doctrines ? A simple list of doctrines won't do [42], and a hierarchy of doctrinal truths returns us to our problem: how identify what is central and what is peripheral to Christian faith ?[43]

Lonergan's answer, it seems, is that those doctrines that manifest the fullness of Christian religious, moral, and intellectual conversion, whether they be ecclesiastical or theological, are the norms. Expression, in other words, is normative if, and to the extent that, it is affirmed on the basis of threefold conversion. And, threefold conversion, or authenticity, is verified not by some external rule, but by a person's attention to his or her own empirical, intelligent, rational, and moral consciousness. The dis—crimination between the unity of faith and the pluralism of expression is subtle and arduous, one that is co-extensive with the longer run of history and is characterized by such conflicts as those that preceded and followed Nicea centuries ago and *Mysterium Fidei* a decade ago. But, there is no other way that the Church can verify Christian conversion.

If this is Lonergan's answer, it is somewhat troubling. It may be methodologically sound, but is it theologically helpful? It seems that doctrines are no more different than any judgments of fact or value. They are normative if and to the extent that they are affirmed on the basis of threefold conversion. So it is that Elizabeth Maclaren charges that Lonergan's means of identifying

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42. See Avery Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1971), p. 153.

43. George Tavard, "Hierachia Veritatum: A Preliminary Investigation", *Theological Studies*, 32 (1971), p. 288, observes that a hierarchy of truths may be established according to some purely formal principle (what one perceives to be central to Christian faith), or along lines provided by a material principle (an existing creed, for example).

what is of Christian faith is impotent.[44] What the Christian Gospel is becomes more a matter for discovery than of tradition.

Perhaps, however, this is not the whole of Lonergan's answer. The fact that such may be the case is hinted at, in an indirect manner, by one of his critics, Paul Misner, who thinks that for Lonergan to be consistent he *should* say no more than that doctrines are judgments that are valid if in line with three-fold conversion.[45] Misner, in other words, thinks that Lonergan does say something more. The tell-tale text is this:

> Finally, of course, the normativeness of any theo-
> logical conclusion is distinct from and dependent
> on the normativeness attributed to divine revelation,
> inspired scripture, or church doctrine.[46]

What seems at work here is some sort of dogmatic principle. It seems that some doctrines are normative because they manifest conversions that, for reasons other than those that could be disclosed in the dialectical wrestling with one's own threefold conversion, we trust to be authentic. The unity of Christian faith is verified on the level of doctrines by certain doctrines whose normativeness is special and privileged. Critics other than Misner have noted that these doctrines are "sneaked in" or imported clandestinely rather than produced by his method.[47] It will not be my argument to banish these theological stowaways. We should, instead, bring them out into the open and require them to work for their passage.

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44. Elizabeth Maclaren, "Theological disagreements and the functional specialities" in *Looking at Lonergan's Method*, edited by Patrick Corcoran, (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1975), p. 81.

45. Paul Misner, "A Note on the Critique of Dogmas", *Theological Studies*, 34 (1973), p. 699, n. 34.

46. *MIT*, p. 299.

47. See, for example, Langdon Gilkey, "Empirical Science and Theological Knowing", in *Foundations of Theology: Papers from the International Lonergan Congress*, 1970, edited by Philip McShane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, Ltd., 1971), p. 93, and Frederick Crowe, "Doctrines and Historicity in the Context of Lonergan's Method", *Theological Studies*, 38, (1977) p. 118.

V.   Towards a means of verifying the unity of faith

Lonergan lists,   first of all, doctrines of primary sources. These include doctrines of the original message as well as doctrines about the original message.[48] Together these comprise the outward witness to God's love. They are what is handed down, the tradition, and theirs is a privileged normativeness.

Next he lists church doctrines. They lie within Christian witness. They are, in other words, closely related to doctrines of primary sources. They meet the ever new exigencies of history. Since they are not simply handed down, but are innovations, they bear the mark of the time and place of their production. They do not add to the content of primary sources, but provide techniques for protecting those sources. Though found mainly in the councils, they have antecedents even in the New Testament confessions of faith.

Methodologist that he is, Lonergan says no more about doctrines of primary sources or about church doctrines. As a theologian he might have explained their normativeness, and, in so doing, he might have provided a means for verifying the unity of faith. Such is the present task.

A.   Media Fidei and Regulae Fidei

Contemporary theological scholarship, then, recognizes a first class of doctrines that we may call *media fidei* because they mediate Christian faith.[49] It is within them that one comes to Christian faith. The *kerygma* evident in such New Testament texts as 1 Cor. 15: 3-8 and Acts 10 : 37-41, obviously mediates Christian faith. This *kerygma* is also reflected in the responses to it, the confessions which are our earliest formulations of faith.[50] They belong to the genre of the Hebrew *shema* and of

48. A doctrine of the original message is found, for example, in the Pauline confession of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15 : 3-8).

49. See Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, Ltd., 1967), pp. 16-84.

50. Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, pp. 28-32.

certain of the psalms, since they were composed and uttered as offerings of thanksgiving and praise to God.[51] Their fundamental use was as an element in the act of worship.[52] They are primarily though not exclusively doxological. They differ from eucharistic prayers only because they also contain didactic elements that have helped believers identify themselves.[53] Such didactic elements are most pronounced in certain of them that were used in baptismal liturgies and came to be called *symbola*.[54]

What is most important about these formulations of faith, confessions, and *symbola*, is that they primarily commit, and secondarily express, commitment to Christ. They are, in other words, *means* rather than *rules* of faith. These *media fidei* constitute the believer as believer, the community of believers as a community of believers. Their main function, in Lonergan's terminology, is constitutive.[55]

There is a second class of doctrines that we may call *regulae fidei* that emerged gradually in the Church under the pressure of controversy.[56] Formulations that were increasingly polemical in spirit and technical in language served to fence off the ways in which Scripture could not be interpreted.[57] They did not tell what was not known before, but they did tell what language could be used with respect to Christian mystery.

The shift, then, was from doctrines that primarily committed and secondarily expressed commitment to Christ to those

51. Antonius Brekelmans, "Origin and Function of Creeds in the Early Church", *Concilium*, 6 (1970), pp. 33-34.

52. Nicholas Lash, "Credal Affirmation as a Criterion of Church Membership", in *Church Membership and Intercommunion,* p. 60.

53. Lash, "Credal Affirmation..." p. 62.

54. Probably from *symballein*, meaning to throw or place together for the purpose of seeing if what is thrown together "fits."

55. *MIT*, p. 298.

56. Piet Schoonenberg, "Historicity and Interpretation of Dogma", *Theology Digest*, 18 (1970), p 133.

57. *Ibid.,*

that reversed these functions. Doxological elements gave way to didactic elements in formulations of the faith. Where once these formulations were primarily constitutive in function, they became primarily prescriptive (dissuading, commanding, prohibiting) and cognitive. Edward Schlink notices that shift in the fact that the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed begins with "We believe..." and the Chalcedonian with "We teach..."[58] The latter creed, unlike its predecessor, was never accepted into the liturgy.

Not only is this shift gradual, but also it is never full or complete. While Constantinople III was on the descriptive or didactic side, Trent retained traces of the prescriptive, if not strictly doxological elements.[59] Still, one can generalize with Gerald O'Collins that by the time of Lateran IV the shift was fairly well pronounced.[60]

B. The normativeness of media fidei and regulae fidei

The question to which Lonergan the methodologist never addresses himself is the reason for, and nature of, the normativeness of the doctrines of primary sources and church doctrines. Characterizing the former as the *media fidei* of modern scholarly classifications and the latter as the *regulae fidei*, we have our clue: these are the symbols, language and practice within which Christian conversion occurs. They commit a person to Christ and constitute him a believer. For that reason they are especially normative and useful in verifying the unity of Christian faith. Whether found in the New Testament or in the form of the Apostles' Creed, these *media fidei* and, to a lesser and subordinate extent, the *regulae fidei*, are the implicit ecclesial dimension of every Christian conversion.

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58. Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, p. 35.

59. Gerald O'Collins, *Has Dogma a Future ?* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1975) p. 27., See also, Sesboüé, "Autorité de magistére et vie de foi ecclesiale...," p. 353, for the observation that Trent's style is still found even in *Humani Generis*.

60. O'Collins, *Has Dogma a Future?* p. 27.

Christian conversion, then, is mediated by the language and actions, both liturgical and social, of the Church. There is no Christ "for us" except he who reaches us through a community that makes him present in word and deed, in Scripture and liturgy, in witnessing *kerygma* and ministering *diakonia*.

The effect of this position is to make certain doctrinal formulations intrinsic to religious conversion. Lonergan would be loth to allow this. Fundamental theology, he insists, articulates conversions, and it is not, as in old style dogmatic theology, a set of doctrines such as those of *de inspiratione scripturae, de ecclesia*, and *de legato divino.*[61] Conversions are the horizon within which the meaning of such doctrines is apprehended.

The argument, however, is that if there is a Christian conversion, not just a religious conversion that is Christian in expression, that Christian conversion is implicitly ecclesial. It is within the horizons of ecclesially mediated Christian conversion that church doctrines and theological doctrines are affirmed. It is within the horizon of the acceptance of a scriptural *kerygma* or confession that we move on to the doctrinal considerations of *de inspiratione scripturae*; within the horizon of adherence to church practice that we go on to doctrinal considerations of *de ecclesia*; within the horizon of our turning to the Church's Christ that we go on to doctrinal consideration of *de legato divino*. Certain doctrines, in other words, are involved in the foundational reality of conversion. Constituting as they do the ecclesial dimension of Christian conversion, they are the means of verifying the unity of Christian faith amidst expressive pluralism.

What then, are we to make of church doctrines, the *regulae fidei?* First of all, they are important. They are closely linked to doctrines of the primary sources, and Lonergan seems correct in grouping both categories together within the function of witness and distinguishing them from theological doctrines that result from the search for understanding. As B. Sesboüé points out, the four great councils of Nicea, Constantinople I, Ephesus, and Chalcedon produced dogmatic decrees that remained

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61.   *MIT*, p. 131.

closely tied to the service of faith, being glosses or commentaries
on the confession or act of faith.[62]

Now, the reason for their importance is that they, together
with doctrines of primary sources, may, and often do, mediate
Christian conversion in a given age and even in all ages. As an
outer ring or fence around the *media fidei*, they participate in-
directly in the mediation of faith. It is hard to imagine Chri-
stian conversion in the last half of the fifth century not be-
ing mediated by the doctrine that one and the same Jesus Christ
is perfect in humanity and perfect in divinity. But, it is a
matter of fact that Christian conversion before that time was
not mediated by this doctrine and it is a matter of discussion
as to whether Christian conversion is mediated by it today.

Church doctrines, then, may mediate Christian conversion
in one age and not in another. Thus, they differ from doct-
rines of primary sources in that their constitutive function is less
prominent and less perennial. They are primarily judgments of
fact rather than judgments of value; they are primarily cognitive
rather than constitutive.

According to Lonergan's Newman-influenced epistemology,
judgments of fact are *iudicia prudentis viri*. This epistemology
seems to be grounded on the observation that church doctrines
are prudential interventions of the magisterium in church life.
Pier Fransen, who acknowledges his debt to M.-D. Chenu for
this observation, claims that doctrinal judgments are pastoral and
prudential interventions seeking to establish common teaching
and practice at a given time.[63] For the sake of the living
communion of faith, they attempt to put an end to controversy
in the Church *(diffinire)* rather than to define a point of faith
(definire).[64] They are, as Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx note,

62. Sesboüé, "Autorité de magistère et vie de foil eccl-
ésiale..." p. 346.
63. Fransen, "Unity and Confessional Statements..." pp. 31
and 35-37. The reference is to M. — D. Chenu, "Introduction à
la théologie," Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques,
24 (1935), p. 706·
64 Ibid., pp. 25-26.

regulations of church language.[65] Accordingly, church doctrines are primarily significant in their own context, and secondarily succeeding ages.[66] The doctrinal statements in the Oath Against Modernism, for example, are primarily meaningful for contemporaries of that movement. Indirectly, the statements in the Oath are relevant to us inasmuch as through their services the communion of faith was kept alive and vigorous so as to include us in these latter days in its number.

But, beyond such influence, certain of the *regulae fidei* have still greater importance. They indirectly mediate conversion not just in one age and derivatively in another, but in all ages. They come to function as *media fidei*. Depending on the depth and breadth of the issues they touch upon, they acquire tremendous importance.

C. The recognition of normative doctrines

Doctrines of primary sources or *media fidei* are the implicit ecclesial dimension of every Christian conversion, and church doctrines or *regulae fidei* are an outer ring within which ecclesial Christian conversions occur. How does the Church determine which credal statements are in fact functioning in those capacities? The answer, it seems, lies in the direction opened up by those theologians who have been writing on the Church's reception of doctrines.[67] It is by reception that the Church recognizes those formulations of faith which are perennially and universally constitutive of and useful to her faith.

Reception, then, is the process by which the Church recognizes and affirms her faith and that which is necessary for the well-being of that faith. Five elements in this definition call for comment.

65. Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith*, (London) Sheed and Ward, 1974), p. 75, and Karl Rahner, "What is a Dogmatic Statement?" *Theological Investigations*, Vol. V (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), p. 36.

66. Fransen, "Unity and Confessional Statements...", p. 31.

67. Ibid., p. 32 and Yves Congar, "La 'réception' comme réalité ecclésiologique, "*Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 56 (1972), 364-405.

First, reception is a process, i. e., a series of on-going historical events. The symbol of the Council of Nicea was not fully received until 381 at Constantinople I. It was the Council of Chalcedon in 451 that received the so-called Constantinopolitan Creed as being the most proficient expression of the faith of Nicea, and it was Pope Hormisdas in 519 who recognized Constantinople I as ecumenical in character though it had not been so either in intention or in fact.[68] We today are receiving those ancient councils.

Second, this process is an active one, i. e., one of discernment and affirmation. The Church judges what is her faith and what makes for the well-being of that faith. She comes to a *consensus* about the *sensus fidei*.

Third, this active process is ecclesial. Significant moments in the process may occur when the Church is in Council, as in the instances mentioned, but the process of articulating the *sensus fidei* is going forward at all times in the devotions of the faithful, in the discussions and acceptance of teachings by the faithful, and in debates and teachings of theologians. The fact that the Council of Florence was never really received in the East is a good example of how the process is ecclesial and not simply hierarchical, for a good number of Eastern bishops were prepared at first to hold that Council ecumenical and authoritative. If the process is not hierarchical, neither is it for theologians alone. Theologians don't and can't "solve" controverted questions of faith. Instead, such questions are solved in the course of time by the whole Church determining the *sensus fidei*. [69]

Fourth, the process bears on what is the Church's faith and what is necessary for the well-being of that faith. Reception distinguishes the faith of tradition from the traditions and customs of particular or local relevance.

Fifth, the process has to do with the content and not the manner of proclamation of formulations of the faith. [70] Thus, for

68. Congar, "La 'reception' ...," p. 372.
69. Fransen, "Unity and Confessional Statement..." p. 37.
70. Congar, "La 'reception' ...," p. 399.

example. the local council of Carthage owing to its doctrines of original sin and grace, has been received and become much more important than the Council of Florence, which had all the juridical guarantees for being an ecumenical council. So also, Nicea and Chalcedon are more important than Trent, and Trent more important than the Oath Against Modernism [72]

The fact that reception is an historical process fills a need that the exercise of dialectics cannot. Dialectics can establish doctrines as truths and values in so far as they reflect religious, moral and intellectual conversion. Nevertheless, dialectics establishes these doctrines as truths and values only in their contexts. Since contexts are on-going and truths and values are approximative, perspectival and revisable, what process can establish doctrines as perennially and / or presently true and valuable? The answer seems to be the process of reception. Whereas all doctrines could be found to reflect threefold conversion. only some doctrines are received. Important statements of the past can and do lose their relevance to the whole Church of every time and place, linked as they are too narrowly to a particular situation. [73] Reception seems, in short, to accomplish precisely what Walter Kasper recommends: a constant reduction of faith formulations to those which serve to awaken faith, hope, and love in one's own time. [74]

The fact that reception is ecclesial or communal likewise corrects the individuals of dialectics and of any theological effort to construct a hierarchy of truths. Dialectics and such efforts both suffer from being personal so that their results tend to be very vulnerable.

D. Unity and ecclesiology

Media fidei and regulae fidei, doctrines of primary sources and church doctrines, go together to make up a complex and flexible means of verifying the unity of faith amidst the diversity of faith expression. We must acknowledge, of course, that this norm

71. *Ibid.*
72. Fransen, "Unity and Confessional Statements..." p. 32.
73. *Ibid.*
74. Kasper, "Geshichtlichett der Dogmen?" pp. 414-416.

is in relationship to the Scriptures which are the *norma non normata*. Just as the Church produces the Scriptures and yet is listening to, servant of, and judged by, the Word of God, so also the *media fidei* declare the sense of the Scriptures and yet echo, serve, and find themselves judged by the Word of God.

All that is necessary in order to transpose the thesis of unity / pluralism in doctrine and theology into unity / pluralism in church life is to employ Lonergan's notion of community as an achievement of common meaning. Community is constituted by common commitment. What is *realized* in such commitment is, at the same time, and at least to a certain extent, *actual* in the shared judgments of fact that are implied in the commitment, *formal* in the shared insights that are implied in the commitment, and *potential* in the shared experiences that are implied in the commitment. [75] This is "to a certain extent", because people who come together in commitment may not come together perfectly in knowledge, understanding, or experience of what they do. They may not be a community of like minds or identical experiences. Ultimately, the verification of community can be only in terms of people's self-identification on the level of commitment.

All that has been said of community is true of the Church. Church membership is a matter of a person's self-identification with the Church in her committing actions, the *sacramenta et articuli (media) fidei*. This realized Church becomes more fuzzy on the levels of cognitive judgments (church doctrines that are purely *regulae fidei*), understanding (theological doctrines), and experience. Rahner refers to this state of affairs when he speaks of the catechumenate, formerly thought of as a vestibule of the Church, as being an on-going process within the Church. [76] We can apply what Lonergan says of apologetics, formerly conceived as an *ad extra* endeavor, in the same way: apologetics is a continuous process within the Church, a process of integrating Christian religious conversion on all levels of consciousness. [77]

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75. *MIT* pp. 79 and 356–357.
76. Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, (London: SPCK, 1974), pp. 73 and 94.
77. *MIT*, p. 123.

It is well to stress that self-identification is with the Church via the *media fidei*. Thus, one becomes a member of a communion, i. e., a living union. This living union is a continuous event of reflecting on, and living, the Word of God in Scripture and in the whole of tradition. To say that the *media fidei* are the ecclesial dimensions of Christian conversion is to imply that the unity of faith is best understood as a communion of the faithful to which the *media fidei* join us.

If church unity is primarily a matter of self-commitment through the *sacramenta* and *media fidei*, there is room within that unity for groups or spiritualities that result from cognitive commitments, i. e., from church doctrines that are purely *regulae fidei* and from theological doctrines, as well as from the various cultures, models, and differentiations of consciousness.

The Church in short, is an open-ended process of self-realization. [8] This is true because it is only through the on-going process of reception that she determines which of her *regulae fidei* have that exceptional validity and function of permanently mediating, albeit indirectly, Christian conversion.

E. Pluralism and ecumenism

A reconstructed theory of pluralism that emphasizes the different functions of *media fidei* and *regulae fidei* yields a notion of the ecclesial union that is to be sought and of the ecclesial diversity that is to be preserved. Unity is to be located in the *media fidei* the constitutive commitments within which Christian conversions occur, and in those *regulae fidei* which, thanks to the process of reception, function as *media fidei*, mediating Christian conversion in ages and cultures other than their own. Failure to be joined in these *media fidei* professed in the context of sacramental actions is division.

This unity, however, allows doctrinal and theological diversity, since church doctrines that are purely *regulae fidei* are

78. The description of the Church as "open" comes from Rahner, The *Shape of the Church to Come*, pp. 93-101, and the description of the Church as an on-going process comes from Lonergan, *MIT*, p. 363.

functioning prescriptively and cognitively only in a given age to mediate Christian conversion indirectly.

Two corollaries may be drawn. First, it seems that today's pluralism can be appraised as a providential corrective to some Christian efforts at reunion. [79] Two movements are going forward in contemporary Christian life. The first is a movement towards unity between Christian confessions. This is the movement of ecumenism, and it aims at the overcoming of division. The second is a movement towards diversity within Christian denominations. This is the movemet of pluralism, and it tends toward a dissolution of uniformity. Though at first glance these two movements might seem to be in opposite directions, a good look at the terminology alone reveals that they are closely related and necessarily linked. Ecumenical unity overcomes division, not diversity, and pluralism dissolves uniformity, not unity. Thus, we are able to say, "Unity in diversity and in no other way".

Secondly, schism appears much more serious than heresy, if by schism we mean a cessation of common commitment and by heresy a rupture of like-mindedness. obviously, it is not schism in the sense of Canon 1325. 2, wherein it is defined as the rejection of the authority of the Supreme Pontiff or refusal of communion with the members of the Church who are subject to him. In that restricted sense, the various Orthodox churches are schismatic. But these churches and Rome have continued to engage in what are easily recognized as the same sacramental credal activities. As a consequence of their not being schismatic, in the present terminology, their full union requires little doctrinal investigation.

The sacramental/ credal activities of the Roman and of the Reformed churches, however, are not so easily recognized as being the same. Therefore, the task of recognition shifts to doctrinal considerations. And so, it is reasonable and necessary that there should be discussion, for example, of Eucharistic

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79. See John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 12, who warns against an ecumenism that is not pluralistic.

doctrine. [80] From such discussion we may arrive, or may have arrived, at the time that we can celebrate Eucharist together. [81]

But when we come to those divergencies in Eucharistic doctrine within the Roman Catholic communion that resemble the historical differences between the Roman and some Reformed churches, presumption favors a continued common Eucharistic table, a continued alignment in sacramental action. What seems an inconsistency of treating separated brethren differently from our brethren having much the same theology is apparent. [82] There is good reason to communicate in the Eucharist with those who have identified with the Church's sacramental action and to require doctrinal dialogue and clarification of those who have not.

The task of ecumenical discernment and the process of reception are closely related. Trying to recognize the face of Christ in the doctrinal statements of a tradition other than our own [83], is part of the process of determining which doctrines are of universal and perennial value as mediating Christian faith, and which are of particular and limited value as being *regulae fidei* for a certain time, place, or community.

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80. Fransen, "Intercommunion...," p. 9, records the stipulations of the Secretariat for Christian Unity concerning intercommunion. The stipulations call for agreement on Eucharistic theology.

81. See Lash, "Credal Affirmation....," p. 66, for the judgment that there is no longer sufficient reason for maintaining separate Eucharistic tables in the case of the Anglican communions.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 72, where the author draws attention to this "inconsistency."

83. Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, p. 80, thus formulates the ecumenical task.

VI. Conclusion

If there is a unity of faith and pluralism in theology, what can we say of doctrine? The answer has been looked for in the writings of Bernard Lonergan. Though his methodological approach to the sources of pluralism is very valuable, that same approach, when turned to verifying the unity of faith, is suggestive but inadequate. The methodologist must turn theologian. No simple answer to the question about doctrine is forthcoming. Nevertheless, contemporary theological scholarship, with its attention to the types, functions, and reception of doctrines, helps indicate how an answer is worked out in the lived experience of the Church.

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Ecumenism in the
New Pluralistic Context

The contemporary Christian theologian has a twofold commitment and task. On the one hand, he is committed to the Christian Faith, to the truth and value it contains and to the task of making it living and meaningful and thereby passing it on to today's secular man. On the other hand, he is fully committed to the secular world, to the scientific knowledge of today, to the cognitive, ethical and existential values and truths that have been scientifically established in the secular world, and to pass them meaningfully on to the Christian community. In this responsible and critical task the theologian may have to challenge both a superficial as well as false secularism and a superstitious as well as superficial Christianity.[1] In the light of this responsible commitment this article examines the contemporary new pluralism, its opportunities and potentialities, and the crisis it has brought about in the Ecumenical Movement of the Christian Churches. In response to the advent of the new pluralism the Ecumenical Movement has to re-examine its goal, ways and method. On the other hand, the Church has to challenge all false and chaotic pluralisms that slip into indifferentism, individualism and isolationism and she has to witness to unity and solidarity, she being 'the sign and sacrament of the unity of all mankind'.

I. The new pluralistic context

Reality seems to be constituted as a unity-plurality dialectic. 'The One and the Many' is the eternal riddle of philosophy. The mystery of God's Being is revealed as 'One in Three'. This universe of ours with its billions of galaxies forms a mysterious unity, but it is obviously pluralistic. We have been told that mankind has a unity of origin, purpose and meaningful destiny,

1. See, David Tracy, *Blessed Rage For Order*: *The New Pluralism in Theology*. A Cross road Book, The Seabury Press, New York, 1975, pp. 4-10.

but it is constituted of numerous races, languages, cultures, nations, tribes and of religions. Each race, culture, language, nation, tribe, and each religion is once again inescapably subject to manifold differentiations and variations. Christianity is an apparently remarkable unity and its claim as a unifying and integrating force in western history cannot be easily denied. Besides, it proclaims the final unification of the whole of mankind and of the whole universe in Christ. But paradoxically again, the Christian Church is notoriously divided into various denominations and sects, with countless inside-groups and parties, each with its own doctrinal and theological support systems.

What is new in today's pluralism is an increasing awareness of our pluralistic situation owing to the discovery of the limitations of human points of view and the complexity of reality and the multiplication of the phenomena of pluralism because of the advance of specialized knowledge in various fields, and the side-by-side existence of pluralism in today's 'global village', so that everybody, in principle, is able and free to choose his own world view, beliefs, value system and life-style. There is not only a new awareness of the fact of pluralism, but also an awareness of the historicity and limitations of each and every world view, value system and life-style. 'Pluralism is the belief that the world is dynamic, unfinished, open'. [2] The historical awareness has called for a conscious attempt on the part of each and every group and individual to create its own and his own identity, value system and life style, and thus to promote and multiply the pluralism.

Sources of pluralism

Biology teaches that forms of life were simpler and homogeneous at the origins and as evolution progressed more complex and heterogeneous forms of life appeared on this planet. Sociology has demonstrated the irreversible onward march of human society

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2. John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, SCM Press, London, 1975, p. 14.

from the primitive, simple and homogeneous forms[3] to the complex
and highly differentiated and pluralistic forms of today. Primitive
societies had a low degree of institutional differentiation. The
State, politics, economics, science and everything else were bound
up together into a single, closely knit entity, which was the
primitive tribe. Here religion often played an overriding function
of legitimation and thus integrated and consolidated the society
into a single whole. Gradually society developed and grew into
a number of diverse, specialized institutions political, economical,
religious, educational, domestic and so on.[4] These separate insti-
tutions became independent developing their own separate and
diverse legitimations. It meant the breaking up of the absolute,
universal and unitary world views, inculding the religious ones,
and the emergence of a pluralism of world views or horizons-
cultural, ideological and religious. Religion or religious world
view thus became one among many others.[5] The religious world
view itself varies from society to society and is subject to constant
and sometimes drastic changes in its interaction with the society
and its various institutions, sciences and disciplines and an in-
creasing pluralism of religious world views emerges continuously
day by day. The relationship of societal, institutional and ethical
pluralism to cognitive (cultural, ideological or religious) pluralism
is mutual and interactional. "The way men live their common
life affects mightily the way they understand the meaning of that
life, and vice versa".[6] Parallel to this pluralistic development of
society, we have to see the development of individual consciousness
from an undifferentiated state to a highly differentiated one, from
the 'common sense man' to the 'scientific man' of today.[7] This

3. See, Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious
Life*, (trans. by Joseph Ward Swain), A Free Press Paperback
Edition, New York, 1965, pp. 37-117.

4. E. Durkheim, *La division du travailsocial*, 4ᵉ ed. Paris,
Alcan, 1922.

5. Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, New York,
Macmillan Co., 1967, p. 62.

6. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, Revised Edition, A Pelican
Book, 1968, p. 15. For the relation between theory and praxis,
see *JEEVADHARA*, Jan. – Feb. 1976, No. 31.

7. See Dr. James Parker's article in this number of *Jeevadhara*.

brings us directly to the cultural, anthropological and psychological foundations or bases for pluralism.

Cultural anthropologists, psychologists and hermeneuticians have rather convincingly pointed out, with ample evidences, certain *basic modes of human perception* with their basic structures and variables. These basic modes of perception are not acquired or learned or chosen by conscious decision[8]; man is generally unaware of the basic pattern in which he or she perceives. These are more fundamental to man than the language he speaks.[9] These basic modes of human perception and the variations in their basic structures are bound up with the varying psycho-somatic constitution of individuals and groups. One of the basic modalities of human perception is the *subject-object relationship*. Here there could be three structural variations. Some people manifest a "kinship with the object", "fusion" with the object, and "experienc of being dissolved into the world" (domination by the object), whereas others "surrender" the object, and "mould" it (through domination by the subject). A third variation is the perception of the sharp separation between subject and object (subject-object dichotomy). Another basic mode of perception is the *form of existential awareness*, which is rather closely related with the subject object relationship. The basic patterns of existential awareness vary. Some people realize their own existence or become aware of it "in the things perceived" and in committing themselves to the external world. Others become aware of themselves in, through, and by their own "feelings",

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8. Karl Rahner calls this as the *gnoseological concupiscence* of man. "Philosophy and Philosophizing in Theology", *Theological Investigations*, Vol., IX, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972, pp. 52, 55.

9. Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, (trans.) Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1967, pp. 46-47. We closely follow here his discussion on the Basic Forms of Human Perception (pp. 46-58). Schlink himself is indebted to the works of K. Jaspers, E. Cassirer, H. Leisegang, E. Jaensch, and H. Weber, who deal with the interpretations of historical and classical texts as well as with the methods of experimental psychology.

both intellectual and spiritual· Still others attain existential
awareness "in the decisions of their will." There may be another
last category who become aware of themselves in their thinking
or selective activity. A third basic modality of perception is the
form of *concrete and abstract thought*. Concrete thought forms
and mental images dominate in the perception of some indi-
viduals or groups, whereas abstract and pure thoughts are natural
to others. Ofcourse, a combination of both concrete and abstract
thought forms is most common, and the difference is due to
their proportionate domination. A fourth basic form of perception
is *thought progression·* A "circular pattern of thought" is chara—
cteristic of some people, where you have "the inclusive mutual
connection of concepts and conclusions in a circular movement…
from cause to effect and from effect to cause".[10] Some others
may have a "teleological thought-form", where the movement
does not return as in the circular pattern, but proceeds in a
single line of progression. Still others may proceed by a combi-
nation of both, "by ascent and descent", or in a "pyramidal"
form. All these basic modalities of human perception with their
structural variations and different combinations engender diverse
and distinct religious, theological, philosophical, ethical, ideologi-
cal and cultural systems and theories.

What is the source of pluralism from the point of view of
Christian theology? How can we understand a theological and
doctrinal pluralism within the unity of Christian faith ? The ulti-
mate source of all pluralism is the inexhaustible mystery of God's
Being and Self Revelation in creation which is an ongoing pro-
cess. Billions of creations like this ever expanding universe of
ours will still be incapable of exhausting the mystery containing
in God. On the part of the human mind any comprehension of
the Reality of God is unattainable. God can never be an object of
human knowledge unlike other objects which man can contain,
comprehend and master. God eludes all human systematizations.
It does not mean that man cannot have any real knowledge of
God. Man possesses real and valid knowledge and truth although
only in a fragmentary, historical and progressive way. God's
revelation in fact corresponds to man's historical existence.

10. Ibid., p. 56.

Christian theology always maintained that God reveals Himself in our history in historical forms that are fragmentary and that He reveals Himself in human history in a progressive way. God's revelation in Jesus Christ is unique and is a 'once-for-all event' and has a perennial as well as overarching significance. But the fulness of God's revelation as well as the full significance of the 'Christ-Event' will be manifested and realized only at the end of time when the human spirit shall be fully united with the Absolute Spirit; when we shall see God face to face.

Revelation is God's Self-gift and faith is man's response to it, man's acceptance of the Self-revealing God. In the Christian tradition both the Old Testament and the New are the record of God's revelation and man's response to it. Human responses of faith assume various elementary forms which Edmund Schlink has called the *basic forms of theological statements*. He has pointed out from the Old and New Testament traditions five elementary or basic forms of response of faith-prayer, doxology (praising God not only for what He does, but also for what He is in Himself), witness (directed to one's fellowmen), doctrine (teaching or instruction, which is a special form of witness), and confession (where all the above forms are concentrated). [11] We may also add religious rites or rituals to these basic forms of the response of faith. Rites and rituals have a mutual relationship to these basic forms of theological statements, in a way similar to the inter-relation of theory and praxis. The point here is simply that these basic forms of the response of faith correspond to the basic attitudes of the religious subject as well as to the diverse basic aspects of the Divine Reality. Any living and personal religion consists of the totality of these various responses or modes of expression in a healthy proportion. The exclusion of any one of these basic elements will lead only to the impoverishment of religion. But the proportions between these elements may vary and thus a plurality of religious as well as theological systems may arise. This question of the elementary forms of response must be, of course, related to what we have said above concerning the different socio-cultural horizons and the structural diversity of the basic modes of human perception.

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11. See, Schlink, o. c., pp. 18-34.

Doctrinal pluralism [12] is of particular importance. For doctrines are the cognitive sub-structure and legitimations of all theological and religious pluralism. Concerning doctrines, a distinction is to be made between *fides qua* (the act of believing) and *fides quae* (formulations of beliefs). Doctrines are not only formulations of beliefs (*fides quae*) but also proclamations or confessions or acts of faith, namely, expressions of "believing" (*fides qua*). As expressions of beliefs, dogmatic statements or formulations have particular cognitive contents (*fides quae*). But these formulations or expressions can never be adequate, exhaustive and comprehansive. We have to keep in mind here that the cognitive content and its formulation can never be strictly separated. The content become tangible, visible, and real only when it is expressed or formulated. [14] The inadequacy of dogmatic formulations comes from the inexhaustive nature of the Object (God or divine realities) as well as from the diversity and historicity of the believing subjects and their particular contexts. In the presence of the Divine Mystery the believer knows and realizes that all his formulations, concepts and categories are challenged, dislocated and shattered. Still he cannot but express it. Hence the need and place for a plurality of doctrinal formulations and statements and the need that all doctrinal formulations should remain open, flexible and subject to correction and complementarity.

Pluralism and Vatican II

There is an increasing awareness in the Church today of the necessity of pluralism for the catholicity of the Church. This awareness is clearly reflected and pronounced in all the Decrees of the Second Vatican Council, especially in the Decree on Ecu-

12. See the article of James Parker on "Docrinal Pluralism", in this number of *Jeevadhara*.

13. See, R. Rahner, "What is a Dogmatic Statement ?" *Theological Investigations*, Vol. V, Baltimore, Helicon Press, 1966, pp. 58–60.

14. To distinguish between faith, doctrine and its formulation Rahner's model of "human communion" is apparently useful. Cf. K. Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church", *Theological Investigations*, Vol., XI, London, Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1974, pp. 21ff.

menism, in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church and in the Decrees on Eastern Catholic Churches and on the Church's Missionary Activity. The Council's dominant use of the "People of God" as the Church's major image, with its more open, heterogeneous, and comprehensive qualities, was a sign of the increasing welcoming of pluralism. [15] The Decree on Ecumenism, while speaking on the relation of the historical Churches of the East and West, mentioned their different "ways", as but "a brotherly communion of faith and sacramental life". [16] By the different "ways" the Council meant a pluralism of customs, disciplines, liturgy, spirituality, government and theology– "a proper freedom in the various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in a variety of liturgical rites and even in theological elaborations of revealed truth...giving ever richer expression to the authentic catholicity of the Church". [17] The mention of a pluralism or 'freedom in the theological elaborations of revealed truth' or "different methods and approaches in understanding and proclaiming divine things", [18] is the most crucial one. Pope John XXIII in his inaugural address to the Council said: "The deposit of faith is one thing; the way it is presented is another. For the truths preserved in our sacred doctrine can retain the same substance and meaning under different forms of expression". [19] Here the distinction between the Church's doctrinal formulations and the truth in revelation or in the deposit of faith is made clear, providing for a pluralism of theological and doctrinal formulations. The Council also insisted that these 'different ways' are complementary rather than conflicting and that they necessarily 'belong to the full catholic and apostolic character of the Church'. [20]

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15. See also Tavard's criticism of the exclusive use of the image "people of God", because of its ambiguity and comprehensiveness to the extent of self-contradictions and its 'temptation to seek a political democracy model with its permissiveness' ("Pluralism or Ecumenism", *One in Christ* 6 (1970) 131-132).

16. *Decree on Ecumenism*, no. 14.

17. Ibid., no. 4.

18. *Decree on Ecumenism*, no. 17.

19. *Acta Apostolicae Sedes*, 54 (1962) p. 792.

20. Decree on Ecumenism, no. 17.

The Council also teaches that "in the Catholic teaching there exists an order or 'hierarchy' of truths since they vary in their relationship to the foundation of the Christian faith".[21] All doctrines of the Catholic Church do not possess the same status or authority; some of them deal directly with the great events and mysteries of salvation or flow immediately from them, whereas others are remotely related to these realities of revelation or are further elaborations of them. In this connection Avery Dulles has pointed out that "some dogmas that were very fundamental and important for a system based on a different perspective will perhaps have less prominence, although they will not be directly contradicted in new dynamic restatements of the faith".[22]

Todays increasing awareness of the fact of pluralism at all levels of human existence - cognitive, ethical, and existential - and the new insight into the deep-rooted sources of pluralism, both in the mystery of God's Being and revelation and in the finite and diverse modes of human existence and perception, form the new context for all ecumenical discussions. Along with it, the Second Vatican Council's directives for a healthy pluralism in all the vital areas of the Church's life - liturgical, spiritual, moral, governmental, theological and doctrinal[23] - together with the acceptance of a "hierarchy of truths" or a hierarchy of the elements of the Church, provide the important keys to the goal and immediate task of the ecumenical movement.

II. Pluralism and the crisis in ecumenism

The Second Vatican Council (1962 1965) and the Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1968) in fact, marked the end of an apparently successful era and the beginning of a new era of crisis for the ecumenical movement. In these two

21. Ibid., no. 11.

22. Avery Dulles, "Church Teaching and Historical Relativity, in *Spirit. Faith and Church*, Philadelphia. 1970. p. 69.

23. We would like to note here two points: Firstly. any attempt to make a strict separation between theological and doctrinal formulations will be futile. Secondly, theological and doctrinal pluralism is not to be considered as an innovation in the Church.

historical Assemblies the Churches went out into the world to see what was going on there. What they saw there was the emergence of a new pluralism and the crisis it has brought in. When the two Assemblies were over, the crisis has already spread into the Churches themselves and into the institutional ecumenical movement. The crisis in the ecumenical movement is described here in *Three Theses* arguing for the inextricable connection of the crisis to contemporary pluralism as described in the first part of this article.

1) *The Crisis in Ecumenism today is due to the emergence of contemporary pluralism and the changes it has brought in, of which people are either unaware, or which they find difficult to cope with. There are evident signs of an apathy and inertia, of lack of effort, courage, confidence, and of hope as regards the acceptance of the new pluralism and its challenges.*

Pluralism is a challenge to absolute and closed world views. The result is, as the Uppsala Assembly noted, that tradition is no longer so authoritative, values no longer so unquestionable and truth, apparently, no longer so self-evident.[24] There is a general crisis of uncertainty and confusion in the world today. George Tavard has suggested that it is the crisis of the uncertainty of a new millennium, the year 2000.[25] Of course, it is partly true. But the crisis originates not exactly in what will happen to us, but in what has already happened to us. The world is learning to live with the new pluralism equipping itself with new categories, concepts, meaning systems, values and new praxis, and it challenges the Church's cognitive, ethical and existential categories and systems and calls for the task of a "revisionism".[26] There are people both in the Church and in the world who are still unaware of what is happening in the world around and of what has happened to themselves. Lukas Vischer has rightly pointed out that the crisis in the ecumenical movement may be due to an "intellectual laziness". He thinks that the crisis could be "due to the fact that

24. *The Uppsala '68 Report.* WCC, Geneva, 1968. p. 390.

25. Cf. G. Tavard, "The Present Eccumenical Moment", *One in Christ,* 5 (1969) p. 260).

26. David Tracy, o. c. Tracy's Book is a suggestion, programme and model for "Revisionism", though it may need a revision for itself !

the churches do not sufficiently realise the changes which have come about and that their thought and action is determined by models of unity which are no longer applicable because they no longer correspond to the realities of today. Perhaps the real name of the *malaise* is intellectual laziness".[27] But the fault may be also due to the failure of the institutional ecumenical movement to educate the Christian masses at the local levels and due to the lack of sufficient, serious and intelligent programmes for it. To live in the midst of a pluralism and be ourselves is not an easy job. The freedom given by pluralism demands serious responsibility. To choose a system for our own life and to be consistent in our life requires strenuous education, a large amount of courage, vision and a capacity to take risks.

For the Christian believer, it is the Lord Himself who has drawn us into this new situation of pluralism and has let loose the crisis, with the catholicity of His Church in view. and of the growth of His own people, the whole mankind in the world. The Church should not be in panic or too much worried about how to preserve the Word of God, the doctrines and the ecclesiastical order; for it is the Lord who preserves and guides the Church, her doctrines and order through His Word which is ever living. To preserve the ancient forms of doctrines. liturgy and order may be rather easier, but to reform and renew them according to the challenges of the times and according to the leading of the Spirit is rather difficult. However the latter is todays task to which we are called by the Lord. We should not be subdued by the laziness, apathy and inertia that are the temptations of the time. With courage, confidence and hope we have to go ahead with our task. When the Lord calls do we need any extra guarantee?

2) *The crisis in ecumenism arises also from a false or defective understanding of contemporary pluralism, as indifferentism, relativism. individualism, isolationism, or rootless activism; namely a lack of understanding of the real meaning of pluralism and the opportunities and potentialities it offers.*

27. Lukas Vischer, "Drawn and Held together by the Reconciling Power of Christ", *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, 1974, p. 12.

Pluralism has often been mistaken for relativism and indifferentism which advocates that differences do not matter. On the other hand pluralism is not a permanent pact to agree to disagree in the sense of a rejection of the possibility of a common search for truth and a convergence. Pluralism does not mean that the human mind cannot attain truth. Of course pluralism may assume false, illegitimate and even chaotic forms and may fall into various erroneous 'isms'. A pluralistic situation where tolerance and generosity are rather easier, may also arise owing to lack of any deep convictions.[28] But precisely because of our own deep convictions, we might be able to respect the convictions of others. We can go ahead, all the same, with the hope of reaching some kind of convergence. Pluralism does not mean that we are all imprisoned in our own tiny cells where communication is absolutely impossible. It is not an invitation to self-exile and isolationism. A pluralistic situation points to our dialogical nature and existence. It is our confrontation with the actual world, its different situations and problems that has brought us to pluralism. However it does not mean a relapse into a rootless activism without any concern for theoretical truth. Pluralism is in fact a blessing as it opens up vast possibilities of truth. It is a constant invitation to dialogue, to learning and to truth, and it can lead to a profound understanding of faith and to the discovery of deeper unity.

3) *The crisis in ecumenism has become acute owing to a failure to complement and balance pluralism with unity, convergence, and a sense of universalism.*

We began by saying that reality is constituted of a unity-plurality dialectic. Pluralism without unity is chaos. We must admit that pluralism faces a temptation to relativism, indifferentism, individualism and isolationism and this can be resisted only by a constant and conscious striving after unity and convergence and by a sense of universalism. The churches in their pluralistic situation lived with in the ecumenical movement quite a long period. Gradually the desire for some visible, tangible unity and a global expression of it began to be felt as an urgent necessity. But the churches could not manifest this visible unity owing to the lack of any one agreed idea and model of unity. There were several

28. John Macquarrie, o. c., p. 2.

conflicting ideas and models: organic union, federation, inter-communion, spiritual unity and so on. The goal and the way of the ecumenical movement were not clear and unity appeared to be elusive. Hence people began to feel and speak of a crisis.

The absense of unity and the resulting crisis are more acutely felt today in the area of theological and doctrinal pluralism. There is an urgent need to identify and verify the underlying unity within the pluralism of theologies and doctrinal formulations.[29] Many of the theologians today think that unity built on a perfect conceptual agreement concerning the dogmas is humanly almost impossible.[30] Christian unity is a unity in faith, unity in the Christian religious experience, unity in the experience of Christian conversion which may be clearly expressed 'in celebrating the the sacraments' "in their physicality" and in serving the world in common action'[31] rather than in clear conceptual expressions agreed by all. Hence orthopraxis seems to be more important than orthodoxy. On the other hand, faith has a cognitive aspect, as has been pointed out in the first part of this article, and this cognitive or rational element is a necessary dimension of all religions, especially in Christianity which is a historical religion. So a common verbal expression of faith, a common profession of faith in 'a common creed around the New Testament kerygma' as the valid norm, as the permanent guide, and as the converging point, is absolutely necessary and attempts must be made constantly to arrive at a common meaning around this common creed, although as we have said, a perfect conceptual agreement may not be fully attained.

III. Revision in the ecumenical movement

In the new pluralisic context and the crisis it has brought into the Ecumenical Movement, the task and programme of the movement have been constantly revised and more thorough re-

29. See Parker's, article, section V, "Towards a Means of Verifying the Unity of Faith"

30. See K. Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XI, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974, pp. 20-22. Also E. Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1974, pp. 47-74.

31. K. Rahner, idem, p, 22.

vision is still needed in certain areas. The concept of ecumenism, of unity and the possible model or models of unity needs clarifications. The goal of the Ecumenical Movement, and the possible ways of reaching it, and the method to be employed are to be clearly envisaged and articulated. In the remaining part of this article the broad outlines of this programme of the ecumenical movement today can only be indicated.

Concept and model of Christian unity as "Conciliar Fellowship"

From the descriptions already given it should be evident that any concept of Christian unity must be a unity in diversity, unity in plurality. Christian unity is not at all a call for the uniformity of ecclesiastical structures, ways of government, disciplines and customs, ways of worship, spirituality and theology, and not even for a uniformity of doctrinal expressions and formulations. The call to unity is not a summons to "return" to the Roman Catholic Church or to any one of the existing churches. As Edmund Schlink writes: "... we cannot regard the other churches as planets rotating around our own church; we must perceive Christ as the sun around whom we and other churches rotate. A sort of Copernican change in our evaluation of the other churches is necessary".[32] What all churches need is a 'conversion' into Christ, and a reformation as well as renewal of life, practices and beliefs according to the times, according to the summons of the Lord. The Christian unity that we seek is not exactly a 'backward movement' to the undivided Church. It is not a rejection of the forms, values and heritage of primitive Christianity either, nor is it a search for a "pure gospel", rejecting all our past historical development. We cannot simply ignore the historical aspect of our divisions and fragmentations, which calls for a reintegration and comprehension. But more correctly speaking, Christian unity is a movement forwards, a growth into a rich catholicity containing a plurality of forms and expressions, complementary and not conflicting, harmoniously held together with the bond of unity in faith and of love. It is not a minimalism to achieve the model of primitive Christianity, nor a 'syncretism' by mere additions of our various views and practices.

32. E. Schlink, "The Unity and Diversity of the Church", in *What Unity Implies*, WCC, Geneva, 1969, pp. 35-36.

All this may sound as abstract and ideal. After all, unity is not a concept, but 'the fellowship which the Church lives'[33] and the final form and quality of this fellowship is hidden from us to be revealed, perhaps, only at the end of time. Unity is a dynamic quality and a permanent dimension of Christian life, "a way of being and living"[84], and it shall not be confused with any form of institutional unity. Yet, can we not speak of a certain expression, form, and structure of this 'being and living in unity'? Can we not speak of a concrete model for Christian unity, a model of church union, which may provide the Ecumenical Movement with a dynamic vision or meaningful horizon, and may function as a goal to be achieved? The models of "organic union", and the "one fully commited fellowship" have strong traditions and are a solid foundation of the Ecumenical Movement.[35] But they must be refined by the elimination of their excessive 'institutional' and 'local' or 'national' character. Vatican Council's model of "a brotherly communion of faith and sacramental life", described elsewhere,[36] and the Nairobi Assembly's model of "conciliar fellowship"[37] must be brought together and their implications spelt out.[38] The recent discussions among the

33. Lukas Vischer, Faith and Order Paper, Second Series, No. 69, p. 13.

34. "A Survey By the Roman Catholic World Council of Churches Joint Working Group", *One in Christ*, 11 (1975) p. 40.

35. See, *The New Delhi Report*, London, SCM Press, 1961. pp. 116 ff. and, *The Uppsala '68 Report*, WCC, Geneva, 1968, pp. 11 ff.

36. *Decree on Ecumenism*, No. 14.

37. *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975*, SPCK, London, 1976. p. 60.

38. Some of the implications of "conciliar fellowship" are indicated in the report of the Salamanca Consultation, convened by the Faith and Order Commision, see, *Faith and Order Paper*, *Second Series, No. 69*, pp. 121–126; also in the report of the Faith and Order Meeting of Accra 1974, *Faith and Order Paper*, *Second Series, No. 72*, pp. 113–120.

Catholic theologians of "a typology of Churches" are moving along the same direction.[39]

'A conciliar fellowship of Churches rooted in Jesus Christ and open to the world'[40] must be there before the Ecumenical Movement as its tangible goal. Needless to say this is only a recovery of the conciliar life-style of the early Christian communities. Conciliar fellowship is a fellowship of local churches which are, each within itself and all among themselves, fully united with the same apostolic faith, the same baptism and the same eucharist, with the mutual recognition of members and ministries, with common commitment of witness in the world and with a sustaining relationship in conciliar gatherings.[41] Conciliar fellowship also requires a visible focal point, a point of reference, a centre of unity, an instrument of common service and reconciliation, a visible sign of the unity, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church. Can we not say that the papacy performs or is able to perform such a function?

A precondition for conciliar fellowship is the mutual recognition of the churches, which is practically a step-by-step mutual recognition of baptism, eucharist and ministry. The mutual recognition or acceptance of baptism is already in practice. The mutual recognition of the eucharist is, let us say, on the way, owing to the eucharistic renewal among the churches today and because of the possibility of a pluralism of doctrinal expressions. Mutual recognition of the ministry is, for the moment, the crucial issue. Indeed, some progress has been made in the recent agreed statement of the Faith and Order Commission, especially on three points: (1) An ordained ministry can be discerned in

39. See, Jan Cardinal Willebrands, "Moving Towards a Typology of Churches", *The Catholic Mind*, April 1970, pp. 40-42; Dom Emmanuel Lanne, "Pluralism and Unity. The Possibility of a Variety of Typologies within the Same Ecclesial Allegiance", *One in Christ*, 6 (1970) 430-451.

40. Lukas Vischer, "Was bewegt die Okumene? Ein Gespräch mit Lukas Vischer", *Herder Korrespondenz*, Heft 5, 31 Jahrgang, Mai, 1977, p. 255.

41. See *Faith and Order Paper, Second Series, No. 72*, pp. 113-114.

the various churches in various forms and structures owing to the interaction of three elements, a) the givenness of the commission of Jesus and the reception of the Holy Spirit, b) the changing patterns of society, c) the Church's response in the Spirit to those changing patterns in social environment. (2) Certain limits to the ministerial diversity can be determined by the Apostolic commission, the action of the Holy Spirit, and by the fact that major patterns of leadership in society are not infinitely variable. (3) The Churches without episcopal succession do not have *the fulness of the sign of apostolic succession.*[42] Further discussions and studies on these points may lead to a common consensus on ministry and to the possibility of different levels or grades of mutual recognition.

We may be disillusioned if we think that mutual recognition of the churches is around the corner. It will certainly not splash down from sky after one or two consultations or conferences. We have to go along the same paths we have been pursuing with patience, perseverance and hope. There are no shortcuts to Christian unity.

Immediate task

The Ecumenical Movement is the movement of the churches towards rediscovering and manifesting their fundamental unity in Jesus Christ and in His Church which is one. The movement advanced on several fronts or rather it was a movement woven together from several threads. We may specify four different fronts or different paths of the Ecumenical Movement. The missionary movements called for unity in common witness to Jesus Christ in and through the common proclamation of His Gospel to all nations; for the unity of the Church was viewed as the unity of her mission. The "Life and Work", "Social Gospel" and similar sociopolitical or action-oriented movements emphasized the Churches' common task and unity in the socio-political engagement and in the transformation of society. The "Faith and Order" movement and the several church union conversations or dialogues around the world focused attention

42. *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognized Ministry,* WCC, Geneva, 1975, pp. 35, 56.

directly on solution of the theological and doctrinal issues that divided and still divide the different churches. The promoters of "Spiritual Ecumenism" stressed the need for fellowship and communion between the members of the different churches by means of common prayer and worship; for unity is, after all, a quality of life and a permanent dimension of Christian living. There were certain conflicts and tensions between these various ecumenical movements and their different ideals of unity. The missionary movements and the Christian social movements appeared to be a threat to the existence of the Confessional Families and the particular heritage of the churches, and were accused of 'compromising the truth'. The church union conversations and Spiritual Ecumenism were accused of introversion and isolationism and of evading the primary task and mission of the Churches in the world. Today owing to the dialogue and cross-fertilization between these various fronts and their ideals, a certain convergence has already been reached in the Ecumenical Movement. The different paths are seen today as complementary, enriching and criticizing each other. The common mission of the churches and their socio-political engagement in the world needs solid theological as well as doctrinal foundations and deeper spiritual energy and communion to contain the resulting conflicts and tensions. On the other hand, unity in faith and spiritual fellowship is oriented to the world, to mission and socio-political commitment. We have to continue further along these main fronts or paths of the ecumenical movement, maintaining their mutual relationship, continuous dialogue and convergence.

In the context of the new pluralism and of the conception of unity as a conciliar fellowship of local churches, the immediate task on all the main fronts of the Ecumenical Movement – direct proclamation of the Gospel, witness in socio-political engagement, verbal and ritual articulation of the faith, spiritual ecumenism - is *local ecumenism*. The new pluralism has contextualized or localized theology, doctrinal formulations, worship, Christian praxis, church structures, ministerial forms and so on, so that the Ecumenical Movement has to be localized in order to enter the stage of realization, decision and commitment. If Church unity is viewed as the conciliar fellowship of the local churches, the first and

foremost task is the full unity of the local church itself. For the present purpose we may describe the local church simply as the Christian community who live together in a particular geographical, historical and cultural context, with a common task and responsibility, in that particular place and context, in regard to the problems and possibilities it presents. The unity of the local church finds its visible or sacramental expression in the common eucharistic celebration of a particular place or context. Christians in each place in their particular historical and cultural context have to advance towards visible unity in their own way. In spite of living side by side, are they not ignorant of each other? Christians in each place have to examine how far the theological positions and praxis of the Confessional Families are relevant in that particular place and to its particular context. What are the theological, practical and psychological obstacles to the mutual recognition of ministries and members in the particular place? Does the local church need a common structure and organization? Or, do we still need the different denominational structures and set-ups in each place, something like the "uniate model" within the Roman Catholic Church? It is a difficult question which needs prayerful study and courageous experimentation in each place. It seems that the denominational set-up is the ideal in the context of the new pluralism, that has cut through the local church itself.[43] This is in fact the proper way where the different Christian denominations have their own historical, social and cultural roots, until their differences are entirely outdated and they have arrived at a perfect convergence in which whatever is valuable in their heritage is safeguarded. But in mission countries where denominational and confessional patterns or systems are imported and have no sufficient historical and cultural roots, the reasons for the common structure and organizaion of the local church are stronger, provided it has a certain amount of flexibility in order to respond to the demands of the new pluralism. At present the Christians in each place must struggle together with these and similar vital questions, instead of crossing over from one church to another. This must be discouraged at all costs at this stage of the Ecumenical Movement, of course, with all respect for the freedom of the individuals to choose their religion,

43.   For this view, see, John Macquarrie, o. c., pp. 15-20.

Local churches fully united, each within itself and all among themselves, have to build up a conciliar fellowship. The relation between the local churches is not one of authority and subjection, but one of mutual submission, always in obedience to Jesus Christ. As this article has shown, while dealing with the crisis of ecumenism, the different types and contexts of the churches should not be a temptation to isolationism and individualism. The different local churches must nurture and maintain an intimate relationship so that the concern of one must be in the heart of another. With this end in view the Ecumenical Movement has the immediate task of working out an *intercontextual method*— a method of holding together, in a creative way the different contexts, with their inevitable tensions and conflicts so that they may compare and relate themselves, and enrich and criticize each other. The churches of different types and from different contexts have to understand, recognize and accept each other as authentic forms of Christian being and living. Hence the need of a certain discernment. A possible way, already mentioned, of recognizing and verifying the unity of faith in the midst of a variety of typologies of churches, namely, a unity not be arrived at by perfect conceptual agreement but in the common celebration of the sacraments and common action in the world supported by a verbally agreed common creed consisting of the New Testament kerygma. Unity is above all verified in the common confession and proclamation that "Jesus Christ is the Lord", the acceptance of the supreme importance of Jesus Christ for us. [44] To this may be added Edmund Schlink's proposal about working out the underlying basic structures of the Church and identifying her different variations or concrete actualizations. It can be a guiding principle in working out an intercontextual method. [45] The suggestion of "a proportional norm", namely, a constant proportion between the structured element (kerygma) and the structuring element (the socio-cultural and historical forces) as

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44. See, George Lindbeck, 'The Future of the Dialogue: Pluralism or An Evantual Synthesis of Doctrine?" in Joseph Papin (ed) *Christian Action and Openness to the World*, The Villanova University Press, 1970, p. 48.

45. E. Schlink, a. c., pp. 33–51.

normative to the different credal and doctrinal formulations seems to be a useful tool in intercontextual evaluation. [46]

Finally, the unity of the Church is a sign and sacrament of the unity of mankind. The confessional disunity is only one form of divisions in the Church and in the world. There are other tragic divisions, alienating and dehumanizing forces, both in the Church and in the world, such as division between rich and poor, racial divisions and conflicts, the struggle between the different nations, ideologies, cultures, societies, languages etc. A fully united Church is a fully united world and vice versa. So the unity of the Church must be seen and discussed in a wider context, in the context of Christ's mission of the unification of mankind and the Church's mission to the whole world. *Oeku-mene means the world and not the Church.* Hence the Church's task of encounter and dialogue with the world, with other religions and ideologies. In the dialogue between the Churches, each and every Church has a "third partner",– the world, the problems and requirements of the world to day. [47] Possibly, th churches may be united in a surprisingly easier way through this way of "indirect ecumenism". The very foundations of Christian theological structure need radical revision in confrontation with the contemporary scientific world and its new categories of life and thought. When each and every Church is thus radically reformed, the dividing walls will automatically crumble and their unity will shine forth. The final goal is nothing but the unity of the whole mankind, the unity of the whole people of God in the Kingdom of God.

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46. Jean Pierre Jossua, "Immutabilité, Progrès, ou Structurations multiples des Doctrines Chrétiennes?", *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 52 (1968) 173–200; also Schillebeeckx, o. c., pp. 47–74.

47. J. B. Metz, "Does Our Church Need a New Reformation? A Catholic Reply", *Concilium*, Vol., 4, No. 6 (April 1970) p. 86.

Communion of Churches in
the Indian Context

The rediscovery of the nature of the Church as a communion of Churches is generally hailed as a remarkable achievement of Vatican II. The ecclesiological studies and the ecumenical developments have brought us to a greater understanding and awareness of the theological depth of this basic ecclesial structure. The Roman ecclesiology of the last few centuries tended to project the image of a highly centralized Church with its head-quarters in Rome. The name Roman Catholic and Catholic seemed to become synonyms!

Such a trend of thinking was the natural outcome of a strange situation in which the Roman Church was preoccupied with European problems both religious and political. From the 8th century the Popes had become kings of the Papal States.[1] Gradually the Papacy emerged as a unifying force of the Western hemisphere. The gradual alienation between the East and the West reached its climax by the eleventh century. It was in 1054 that the representative of the Pope excommunicated the Byzantine Patriarch who in turn excommunicated the representatives and those who sent them from the West.[2]

This was the beginning of a new series of events in which the East and the West went their own ways. Protestantism and the subsequent Anglican revolt turned out to be a disastrous blow to the concerted action of the Latin West.[3] The

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1. Thomas P. Neil and R. Schmandt, History of the Catholic Church, Milwaukee, 1957, p. 134.

2. Francis Dvornik, Byzantium and the Roman Primacy, New York, 1966, pp. 124-153. The author gives details of this crisis in Rome-Byzantium relations.

3. Yves Congar, Historical Development of Authority in the Church, in *Problems of Authority* ed. by John M. Todd, London, 1964, pp. 119-167.

Council of Trent which was convoked to defend the Roman tra-
ditions against the Lutheran attack was another step forward in
the policy of Roman centralization. Vatican I, which defined the
Roman Primacy and Papal Infallibility, was an ulterior develop-
ment in the same trend of centralization. It should be noted
that all the great Ecumenical Councils of the Church during the
first millennium were convoked in the East while all the subse-
quent Councils were conducted in the Latin West. This strange
situation paved the way for shaping the Church as a monarchical
society with its headquarters in Rome and a good number of
'Princes' in charge of the administration of the various depart-
ments of the Curia.[4]

But the rediscovery of the nature of the Church draws
attention to the ecclesial reality of the other Churches. By the
communion of Churches we understand the fellowship of Churches
which have their own identity and individuality. The individuality
of a Church is not a superficial distinction on the basis of lang-
uage, culture, race or territory. It goes much deeper. This enquiry
leads us to the very constituents of the ecclesial reality.

Communion of individual churches

What is the basis of the individuality of a Church? What
is its inalienable and unavoidable identity? The constituent in-
dividuality of a Church is the specific form of Christian faith
and way of life which the Apostles, who are the pillars of the
Church, and their immediate disciples, have established. The Apos-
tles were officially commissioned to be the authentic witnesses
of the gospel.

> "An individual Church implies also autonomy in terms
> of its apostolic origin, liturgy, ecclesiastical disci-
> pline and spiritual heritage. Since all the Churches
> have to trace their origin to the Apostolic experience
> of the Risen Lord, the original sharing of this
> Apostolic experience and its growth in a specific
> manner contributed to the individuality of a Church.

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4. J. F. Broderick, Papacy in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*,
Vol. 10, New York, pp. 951-970.

As the experience of the Risen Lord presented by the different NT writers represents the Christ-experience of their individual communities and it possesses an individuality of its own, so also the apostles experienced the Risen Lord in their own personal way and they communicated that experience with its individuality to their Churches".[5]

They are the authoritative witnesses of the Christ event. This apostolic heritage of a Church is unique. The apostles went to different places shared with the Good News with others and established a Christian way of life. From their different experiences emerged the different individual Churches.[6]

These Churches of apostolic origin have a unique position in the Church. They have a normative and constitutive role. Every apostle had his specific Christian experience which he explained to his disciples. Each gave shape to the first community in his own life situation. Hence the common sharing of the Churches of apostolic origin enriches the Universal Church and makes it truly Catholic. No Church can exclusively claim the monopoly of the whole Christian truth. Concrete expressions of the same truth of the Gospel in the different cultures have complementary roles. The Roman Church took its origin from the patrimony of the apostles Peter and Paul. The Churches which were founded by her have to conform with her for their ecclesial reality which is the mother Church. The ancient Christian community of India was called the Thomas Christians and they used to call their heritage the "Law of Thomas" which

5. Fr. M. Vellanickal, Understanding of Evangelization in the Context of Present-day India, CBCI General Meeting, Calcutta, 1974, pp. 43-44.

6. In 1952 in connection with the 19th century celebrations of the arrival St. Thomas the Apostle in India Pope Pius XII made the following statement, appreciating the identity maintained by the Christian community founded by the Apostle St. Thomas: "This Apostolic lineage, beloved sons and daughters, is the proud privilege of many among you who glory in the name of Thomas Christians, and we are happy on this occasion to acknowledge and bear witness to it" AAS, 1953, pp. 96-97.

they believed to be different from the Law of Peter.[7] But at the same time they were quite happy to cooperate with those following the Roman tradition on condition that they did not impose their way of life on them. The different individual Churches which exist today have handed down to us the original testimony of the apostles, and on ecclesial level all of them are equal in dignity.

The term rite is an inadequate term to express the individuality of a Church. This term, which is of Latin origin, connotes the rituals or the external characteristics of a particular Church. But the term Church means much more than a rite! The languages used in the liturgy also began to be adduced to specify a particular Church. Thus we have the "Latin rite", "Syrian Rite", "Coptic Rite" etc.[8] The decree on Eastern Churches of Vatican II makes the following statement on the structure of the Catholic Church:

> "That Church Holy and Catholic, which is the Mystical Body of Christ is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit through the same faith, the same sacraments, and the same government and who combining into various groups held together by a hierarchy, form separate Churches or rites. Between these, there flourishes such an admirable brotherhood that this variety within the Church in no way harms her unity but rather manifests it. *For it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or rite retains its traditions whole and entire* while adjusting its way of life to the various needs of time and place" (art. 2),

7. The Goan archbishop Dom Menezes wanted to bring the Church of the Thomas Christians under the Portguese Padroado. He wanted the Thomas Christians to accept the Law of Peter instead of the Law of Thomas cfr. Placid Podipara, The Thomas Christians London, 1970, p. 139.

8. Samuel Rayan in his article "Sociological Factors and the Local Church as Eucharistic Community" seems to ignore the identity of the individual Churches in India. The individuality is not to be reduced to a mere sociological factor. Cfr. Vidyajyoti, Aug. 1976, pp. 307-314.

The Oriental Churches can understand and admit only that eccle-
siology which accepts the equality and fellowship of the different
individual Churches. For them the Roman Church is an indi-
vidual Church with its own Apostolic origin. Hence every indi-
vidual Church considers her traditions equal to those of the others.
Every Church is obliged to maintain, foster and share her eccle-
sial experience and heritage with the fellow Churches. This is
the fundamental principle in the missionary obligation and
dimension of a Church. Missionary activity is the sharing of
one's ecclesial experience of the Christ event with others. Hence
the Decree on the Oriental Churches of Vatican II explicitly states
the equality of the right of the individual Churches to preach
the gospel.

> "Such individual Churches, whether of the East or
> of the West, although they differ in somewhat among
> themselves in what are called rites (that is, in Liturgy,
> ecclesiastical discipline, and spiritual heritage)... are
> consequently *equal in dignity*, so that none of them
> is superior to the others by reason of rite" [9].

Vatican II is quite clear on the uniqueness of the individual
Churches. It is not to be considered territorially. For example
in the same place there may be more than one individual Church! [10]
The Council does not attribute the individuality merely to a local
basis as some of our authors seem to assert: Article four on the
Oriental Churches states that "attention should everywhere be
given for the preservation and growth of each individual Churches".

The individuality of a Church cannot be safeguarded if it
does not have its own system of government. Therefore Vatican
II asserts the equality of rights of the individual Churches to
have their own system of government :

> "This Sacred Synod, therefore, not only honours this
> ecclesiastical and spiritual heritage with merited
> esteem and rightful praise, but also unhesitatingly
> looks upon it as the heritage of Christ's universal
> Church. For this reason, it *solemnly declares that*

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9. Vatican II Oriental Churches art. 3.
10. Oriental Churches art 4.

> the Churches of the East, as much as those of the
> West, fully enjoy the right and are duty bound, to
> rule themselves" [11].

This kind of autonomy cannot be claimed by Churches which have to conform to their respective Mother Churches from which they derive their ecclesial identity. The apostles authoritatively interpreted the Christian faith and established a Christian way of life according to the social, political, historical and cultural contexts of the people among whom they preached the gospel. This environment has its own share in shaping the individuality and uniqueness of a Church.

Neo-colonial influences: a danger to the communion of Churches

Though the idea of the communion of Churches is the accepted principle of Eastern ecclesiology the Eastern Churches in India constantly faced a threat to their own individuality from the beginning of colonialism in India. The main threat to their individuality comes from a kind of indoctrination by which the Easterners themselves are kept ignorant of it and of their own heritage, [12]

The centres of priestly and religious formation, in many cases, play a conspicuous role in this process of alienation. Eastern ecclesiology is in many respects different from its Western counterpart. The basic trends of 'Lumen Gentium' also remain quite Western. [13] Though the first chapter is on the mystery

11. Oriental Churches art 5.

12. Cfr· The Romanization tendency ed. by J. Vellian, Kottayam 1975, pp. 70-84.

13. "The scope of Lumen Gentium remains typically western despite the place it gives both to espiscopacy and collegiality, and patriarchates are hard put to find a place in it. (n. 23.) The awkwardness created by this ecclesiological outlook inherited from Latin tradition is shown up in the famous Nota Paraevia added to chapter three, which deals with hierarchical constitution of Church and episcopate" Emmanuel Lanne OSB, United Churches or Sister Churches, in One in Christ, 1976, p. 117.

aspect of the Church the subsequent hierarchical and juris-
dictional emphasis has reduced the pneumatic aspect of the Church
which is the core of Eastern ecclesiology.

The Church exists in dependence on Christ who is the head.
The Liturgical assembly which is the praying Church is her most
authentic manifestation. Belonging to the Church does not merely
consist in the blind acceptance of a set of formulations of faith.
The local Church and the universal Church are the two dimen-
sions of the same ecclesial reality[14].   The Catholicity is prior to
the universality. The Church of Jerusalem though it was limited
to a small region was already the Catholic Church. The har-
monious and coherent communion of the individual Churches
constitutes the Catholic Church. No Church can monopolize the
Catholicity. It has to be proved in its ecclesial authenticity and
openness. Segregation and sectarianism is a sin in the Church
which is the Body of Christ. Jesus Christ is the only High Priest
from whom all the Churches have their priesthood, Eucharist
and leadership. The whole ecclesial hierarchy should maintain
and foster this unity of the Body of Christ.

A divided Christianity is a contradiction in itself. Christ
is divided![15]. The unity of the divine persons is the source of
unity of all Christians. The Eastern Churches give great emphasis
to the individual Churches and from that stand look at the
ecclesial unity which is the result of the communion an fellow-
ship of Churches. This outlook safeguards their liturgy, spiritu-
ality, discipline and ecclesial traditions. The Western ecclesiology
seems to start from the unity and then turn to the diversity!
Such a trend has led to a pyramidal ecclesiology which is now
reformulated in the light of collegiality. An Eastern Church has
its own self-goverment and has a Patriarch or Catholicos as its
hierachical head.   But the permanent Synod maintains the

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14.   John Madey in his book *In search of Oriental Catholi-
city* (Changanacherry 1975) analyses the specific characteristics of
Eastern Ecclesiology. Cfr. the article 'Church according to the
Christian East' ibid. pp. 1-12.

15.   I Cor. 1, 13.

collegial character and safeguards the principle of co-responsibility in the Church. [16]

Neo-colonial influence

By neo-colonial theology in India is meant a new trend in theology which claims to create a new kind and basically clings to the thought patterns of western theology. The promoters of this new trend argue for genuine Indian theology but the product seems to be neither western nor eastern. Hence it is disowned by the West and viewed with disgust by the East! If Western thought patterns and categories are presented in Indian garb they can never be Indian in character. Their spiritual outlook, discipline, liturgical patterns, life-style etc. are basically of Western orientation. The radical defect of this trend is that it has a fabricated artificial outlook and is devoid of a life content. Its preoccupation is with presenting this in an Indian garb instead of giving expression to the *innermost experience* of a man of genuine Christian faith. A theology devoid of living experience will always be artificial. People who are free from the stress and strain of human problems become *too professional* in interpreting the Indian mind. It is interesting to note that this attempt is the result of a preoccupation with covering up the Western heritage both in thought and outlook. Independent India can no longer easily swallow all the imported ideologies and systems. During the colonial period such ideas were freely accepted and diffused. Now the tide has turned. Indians are aware of their own identity, and various developments both national and international have helped them grow more in self-respect and self-esteem. This new situation has prompted even foreigners in India to adjust themselves to the Indian life situation and thought patterns. In many cases Christian leaders especially the clergy are forced to assert their Indian identity. In this background the new preoccupation with an Indian theology is quite understandable. The neo-colonial tendency is quite evident in the attitudes, loyalty and priorities of those who practice it.

16. The Oriental Code of Canon Law prepared by the Roman Commission has the following canons which deal with the Permanent Synod in the Oriental Churches on Persons (Cleri Sanctitati) Canons 288-295.

The facts of history admit the existence of Christianity in India for the last twenty centuries. The existence of this Christianity for the last twenty centuries resisting the all-embracing and all-absorbing attitude of Hinduism deserves special study and reflection. This ancient Christian community can be called Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in worship.[17] It is quite revealing that the history of Christianity in India is not properly taught at present in most of the centres of theological and religious formation in India. For them the history of the Church means the history of the Church in Europe. How can there be an Indian theology which is not open to the ecclesial experience of ancient Christianity in India.[18]

17. Placid Podipara, is an authority on the history, customs and traditions of the Thomas Christians of India. He has called this Church "Hindu in culture, Christian in Religion and Oriental in worship".

18. According to an article entitled "Alienation or Liberation? Towards an Evaluation of the History of Christianity in India" in *Jeevadhara* Vol. VII, No. 37, pp. 17-85, the concept of universal brotherhood was imported into India from Europe! "What was striking about the forms of Western Christianity that came to India since the 16th century was the belief in the universal brotherhood of man. All men were considered the children of God and the brothers of Christ. This view contrasted favourably not noly with the attitudes of traditional Hinduism but that of the Eastern Christianity in India" ibid. p. 60-61. Even the Europen historians do not seem to suscribe to such sweeping statements. The sources of history reveal that the European missionaries were not in favour of making an Indian a Bishop because of his dark complexion! The Acts of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide reveal the fear of the Europeans that the episcopal dignity will be vilified if it is conferred on Indians. Cfr. Archivium de Propaganda Fide, Lettere, Vol. 236, ff. 729-740. The bitter experiences of Bishop Cariatti and Thomas Paremakal while they were in Rome and Portugal 1778-86 are reported in 'Varthamānapustakam', Athirampuzha, 1936 pp. 457-523

Colonial ecclesiology

Neo–colonialism is quite evident in ecclesiology. The Catholic and universal traditions of the Church from earliest times reveal that the Catholic Church was always considered a communion of Churches. The various individual Churches had their own hierarchical leadership. The early ecumenical councils provide us with ample evidence of this nature and structure of the Church. But the gradual separation between the Roman Church and the ancient Churches of the East paved the way for a new situation in which the Roman Church began to develop an ecclesiology of its own taking into account only Roman traditions:

Such an ecclesiology spread in the Latin Church through the theological formation of the seminaries. The seminary system started in the 16th century and the theological formation of the clergy gradually came under this pattern. The Roman canonical heritage became the heritage of the Churches which adopted the seminary pattern of clerical formation.

The clerical formation in the seminaries of India faithfully followed Western tradtions. In most cases this continues even today. Seminary formation developed into a large institutional system and students belonging to different ecclesial traditions began to be trained together. The clergy of the Eastern Churches who constitute the majority of the missionary personnel in India are not generally given a formation according to their ecclesial traditions. For the Easterners the liturgy is the door–way to ecclesiology. But the students who are trained in seminaries under Latin missionaries are generally given training in the Roman Liturgy and discipline and they return to their respective fields of apostolate with very little identity with, and respect for, their own ecclesial heritage! In many cases for them 'universality and openness' mean indifference to their own Church. Any assertion of the identity of their own Church is pictured as narrow-mindedness. Catholicity is practically reduced to a kind of conformism to the western traditions and practices. In fact the use of the word 'ritus or rite' is quite inadequate to express the ecclesial reality of an individual Church. The word rite has a formalistic emphasis on externals. In such a situation different

rites do not mean the different ecclesiological traditions. They are depicted as a superficial barrier which keeps the people of God in different jurisdictional units and causes conflicts! Rites considered merely on a jurisdictional basis impoverish the Church and reduce it to an empty shell devoid of theological content. This strange situation is far from ideal in the Indian context. It is another aspect of the miserable consequences of colonial theology in India.

Neo-colonialism in the missionary field:

The Church is essentially missionary[19]. When a Church becomes less aware of this she becomes less worthy of the name. The Churches which constitute the Catholic Church have the same dignity, rights and obligations[20]. The mission which the Church has received from Christ has to be continued[21]. It is a life-sharing process. The growth of a Church depends on her missionary dynamism. A living organism cannot stop growing. The missionary dynamism is inherent in her ecclesial nature. Therefore it is not a mere additional obligation. This missionary right is inalienable and unquestionable. Therefore every individual Church has the right and obligation to grow, by sharing her Christian experience and heritage with others. The following statement in the Orientation paper presented by Fr. M. Vellanickal in CBCI General Assembly in Calcutta in 1974 on the topic 'Understanding of Evangelization in the Context of Present Day India' seems quite relevant:

> "Since the Christ-experience as expressed in the Church of India is handed down to us through the three individual Churches (Latin, Malabar and Malankara) a genuine concern for evangelization in India should impel all these individual Churches to help each other to preserve their authenticity and grow in their individuality. Thus all of them will be better equipped to share their Christ-experience with their fellowmen in the country. For fulfilling this task of evangelizing our country an authentic growth

19. Decree of Vat. II on Missions art. 2.
20. Vat. II Oriental Churches art. 3.
21. Jn 20, 21; Mt. 28, 18–20; A. 1, 8.

of these individual Churches is indispensable. There-
fore optimum conditions should be maintained for
the proper and organic growth of all the three indi-
vidual Churches in India by making the best use of
their personnel and resources"[22].

Vatican II has formulated article 3 of the decree on the
Oriental Churches taking into account the strange situation in
India. All the commentators on this article specifically speak
about the injustice which has prevailed in the mission field in
India for a long period[23]. But this injustice that has existed for
centuries and continues to exist in this country was not denoun-
ced except by a few theologians of the Oriental Churches!

It is a sad truth that when a theological faculty in India
was consulted on this matter the reply was not in favour of
admitting equality of rights of the individual Churches in preach-
ing the gospel. The fundamental right and obligation of a Church
to preach the gospel was considered merely on jurisdictional
terms! Neo-colonial theology cannot go deeper than that![24]. But
despite the neo-colonial resistance from similar agencies the
Vatican II asserted the equality of the Churches in the missionary
field. This cause for demanding justice in the Churches in India
was supported and sustained by a few theologians outside India.
Some of the observations of the experts of the Council, while
commenting article 3 of Vat. II on Oriental Churches, are given
below:

"The real reason why the right to preach the gospel,
that is the right to engage in missionary activity, is
especially mentioned among the rights and obligations
of all the individual Churches is to be traced to the
situation in India, where the Malabar Church,
which has a large surplus of priests, was until

22. Fr. Mathew Vellanickal, Understanding of Evangelization
in the Context of Present-Day India, (Orientation Paper No. 1,
C. B. C. I. General Meeting, Calcutta, 6-14 Jan. 1974, pp. 44-45.

23. The conservations of theological experts of the Council
are given below.

24. Cfr. Herbert Vorgrimler (ed), Commentary on the Docu-
ments of Vatican II, Vol. 1, 1967, p. 316, foot-note No. 10.

recently only permitted to convert people to the Latin rite"[25]

"By stressing the equal dignity of the different Catholic rites, the Council condemns clearly the theory of those who, mostly in the 18th cent., taught that the Roman Rite enjoyed some kind of precedence over others. In the past, the apostolate in the missions has been conducted exclusively in the Latin rite. This practice has been resented by some Easterners, mostly in India where the priests of the ancient Malabar rite were always obliged to adopt the Roman rite to undertake missionary apostolate."[26]

"However, the situation is different for the flourishing Catholics of the two Syrian rites in South India, in the state of Kerala. The Malankarian and the Malabarian Christians of the West Syrian and East Syrian (Chaldean) rite respectively whose claim to have been converted by the Apostle Thomas himself, although sounding improbable, cannot be easily rejected, were not permitted to extend their missionary activity to their pagan Indian brothers because the territory had been assigned to Latin rite missions, which rite after all reached back that part of the globe hardly a few hundred years. This was considered not only unjust but also short-sighted, because the Malabarian Church is going through a period of awakening of priestly and religious vocations of unheard-of proportions. In addition, being denizens of India so much longer than the Latin rite Church, the Syrian rites are not considered contami-

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25. Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, ed. by Herbert Vorgrimler, Vol. 1, London, 1967. p. 315.

26. The Documents of Vatican II, ed, by Walter M. Abbott, London, 1966, p. 375, foot-note No. 7:

nated by the European background of so many
Latin rite missions." 27

This strange situation which was internationally denounced as
sheer injustice has not yet arrested the attention of many of our
theologians in India. This is a typical example of neo-colonialism
which is quite blind to the Indian ecclesial reality.

Towards a catholic ecclesiology:

The Catholicity of the Church is prior to its universality.
Christ's Church is universal wherever it exists. The Catholicity
consists in the openness of the local Churches to other individual
Churches and the whole world.

If a Church, even though of apostolic origin, keeps aloof
from the ecclesial experiences of other individual Churches and
obstructs their growth it cannot be called Catholic. A Church
which is not open to the ecclesial reality of other Churches is
blind to the divine heritage of the universal Church. The ecclesial
traditions of the apostolic Churches have a complementary role
and their mutual communion and fellowship constitute the unity
of the Church. Any attempt to ignore this basic structure of the
Church will lead to monstrous developments in the Church.

The concept of the communion of Churches is a great deve-
lopment in the idea of catholicity. The Churches which were
complacent have begun to realize that Catholicity is a gradual
process which has to be acquired through openness to other
Churches. It is the same Christ and his revelation that are trea-
sured in the traditions of individual Churches. The Fathers of
Vatican II realized this and made the following statement: "For
distinguished as they are for their venerable antiquity, they are
bright with that tradition which was handed down from the
apostles through the Fathers, and which forms part of the divinely
revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church" 28.

27. Victor J. Pospishil, Orientalium Ecclesiarum, The Decree
on Eastern Catholic Churches of the II Council of Vatican, New
York 1965 pp. 13-14.

28. Oriental Churches art. 1.

Catholicity can be fostered only when people are made sufficiently mature to understand and appreciate the legitimate differences within the Church. Such an openness is impossible where Christians do not have the possibility of experiencing and studying the authentic traditions of the different Churches. It is a fact of history that those Eastern Churches which have communion with the Roman Church have become almost carbon copies of the Roman Church: the history of uniatism provides us with ample proof of this statement [29] that catholicity and westernization were almost identical in ecclesial practice [30].

This strange situation endangers the Catholicity of the Church. To join the Roman communion results in the Romaniza-

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29. Cyril Korolevskij, Uniatism, Rome, 1927, The author explains how uniatism and ecclesial union are quite different, p. 4. Through uniatism the Easterners become "Roman" Catholics. Uniatism is a bridge for crossing over to Latinism. C. Korolevskij analyses the cases of the different Oriental Churches who are in communion with Rome and makes the following thought-provoking statement:

"It is impossible to deny that the most part of our Oriental Catholics are Uniats or in the process of so becoming. Again amongst these are to be found those who are content with the situation, who delight in it, and who continue to develop it. In order to lead these minds to a more reasonable conception of union, we have to fight not only against the Latins who after all are excusable seeing that they speak of things that they do not understand, and which unhappily they no longer do. Our most dangerous opponents are not the Latins: they are our Uniats, our own Oriental Catholics."

30. Emmanuel Lanne, United Churches or Sister Churches in One in Christ, 1976, pp. 106–123.

"The Churches of the East and of the West have never had communion with Rome in the same way. Everyone who has any knowledge of the history and ecclesiology of the Christian East is aware of this" p. 123.

According to the author "This problem of the united eastern Churches is one of the major obstacles to the reforming of unity with the Orthodox Churches" p. 106.

tion of the Churches. Vatican II has succeeded in tracing the source of this problem and has given the following guide-line on this matter:

> "All Eastern Church members should know and be convinced that they *can and should always preserve their lawful liturgical rites* and their established way of life, and that these should not be altered except by way of an appropriate and organic development. Easterners themselves should honour all these things with the greatest fidelity. Besides, *they should acquire an ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them.* If they have improperly fallen away from them because of circumstances of time or personage, let them take pains to return to their ancestral ways." [31]

This guide-line remains ignored in most of the Indian seminaries where the students of the Eastern Churches are undergoing clerical formation. Theological formation is given without ecclesial experience of one's own Mother Church! For them the Mother Church is the Church in Rome. Hence while introducing elements of Indianization these neocolonial centres study the principles and practices of the Roman liturgy and make haste to apply them in their own Church which perhaps already possesses the same elements of Indianization in other forms. The inability to understand the identity and the symbolism of one's own Mother Church is the outcome of the formation imparted in the neo-colonial centres of theological formation. The one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is narrowed down by circumstances to certain trends which endanger her Catholicity. Seminary formation with its Western heritage seems to play a very important role in this process of self-alienation in the local Churches in India. The Church in India has a rich heritage and she can play a great role in developing the idea of the Church as a communion of Churches. Our forefathers of the 16th century had a greater awareness of their ecclesial identity and could resist the process of Westernization of the Church. Their distinction of the ecclesial identity as the "Law of Thomas" and "Law

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31. Oriental Churches, art 6.

of Peter" while favouring the possibility of cooperation and fellowship is profoundly thought-provoking. Churches established by Thomas and Peter will have their legitimate diversity. The Thomistic experience of the Christ event and the specific socio-cultural set-up in which the seed of the Gospel sprouted and developed and the ecclesial relations with Churches of the same Apostolic origin have shaped their identity. The Coonan Cross Oath of the Thomas Christians in 1653 against the Portuguese Jesuit Bishops and the subsequent conflict with the Westernizing missionaries and the struggle for indigenous leadership were direct-ed at maintaining the equality and identity of their mother Church [32]. The reunion of a section of the Thomas Christians in 1930 was the result of the readiness on the part of Rome to accept the identity of their heritage with its own indigenous leadership.

Conclusion

As we have seen the great danger to the Catholicity of the Church is a new form of false universalism which cannot under-stand and appreciate the Church as a communion of Churches. The seminary formation, which is basically on the Western pattern, in many cases provides the background for this false universalism. Through the clergy who constitute the leadership in the Church the laity are also influenced by these ideas. But the Church in India has a great role to play in the Asian context which is rich in diversity in all respects. The idea of true Catholicity which enriches the Church through diversity will be a source of inspira-tion for bringing the gospel message closer to the people of this continent.

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32. Xavier Koodapuzha, Church History (Malayalam) Kottayam, 1974, p. 626.

The Church as the Communion of Churches according to the Oriental Fathers

The new image of the Church

Vatican Council II has given the world a new image of the Church different from the one emphasized in Vatican I. If in the last century, because of forces that threatened the very existence of the Church as a visible social reality, the stress was on the Church as a divinely instituted society with distinctive notes and characteristics, today what is placed in clear light is her spiritual reality. She is a sign and sacrament of salvation to all men showing forth the Father's eternal plan realized in the fullness of time in the Incarnation of the Son, and being realized in this era of the Church through the activity of the Holy Spirit. She shows the matter-form, sign-significance polarity: she is the holy and one Church of God for achieving the sanctification of all men, and yet she is a pilgrim community of sinners groping their way to the final fulfilment. She is a single catholic organism which should exert its influence on all men, and yet concretised into local, particular and individual churches embracing vastly different cultures and thought patterns. In this conception of the Church as a single mystery, a society founded by Christ to embrace the whole human family, and as the Mystical Body of which Christ is the head, there is a danger that the positive value of her particularity realized in the individual ecclesiastical traditions and structures may be overlooked. If Vatican I tended to picture the Church as a monolithic world-wide social institution very much in the manner of a huge Red Cross organization, Vatican II has inclined in the opposite direction to show her as a monistic spiritual entity with only accidental external diversity of time and place. But at the same time Vatican II has shown that the actual reality of the Church that reaches the individual Christian is the local Church, the community gathered around the Eucharistic table presided over by the Bishop who has the

fullness of priesthood, and with all the means of sanctification needed for the life and growth of the Church. This tension between the one universal, mystical reality and the diversity of individual Churches is discernible already in the Patristic times, especially in the contrast between the Fathers of East and West.

There is no doubt that the image of the Church will vary according to the different concerns and backgrounds from which one takes the view. She may be seen as a closed society teaching an outdated view of life and the world over against the open and progressive community of men created by science and technology today. For those who look for moral guidance and firm principles in moral life she appears as the firm defender of the deepest values and concerns of man. In terms of efficiency and administration the Church is perhaps the most solid world-wide organization on the face of the earth today. What may be not so evident today is the element of inner communion and intimate spiritual cohesion among the various churches, communities and groups that constitute the universal Church. The Fathers and writers in the early centuries of Christianity show a special concern to make manifest this inner bond uniting men together into a family created not by external functions and services but divinely through the presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of the people, and the activity of the Holy Spirit in them. But there is considerable diversity among them in conceiving and interpreting this unity. This depends to a great extent on the immediate context in which they are dealing with the problem of the Church as well as the particular philosophy each one of them has for his background. They deal with the Church generally in their exhortations to the catechumens and polemics against schismatics and heretics, and in their commentaries on the books of the Bible. From the point of view of philosophy the Alexandrians have a neo-Platonist background, the Antiocheans and Syrians show an Aristotelian realism, while the Latin Fathers of Africa and Europe show a special concern for juridical legitimacy.

Concern for the unity of the Church

At a time when the whole Church was rocked by heresies and schisms and divided into groups and factions hurling accusations and anathemas at each other the primary concern was to

proclaim a certain transcendental unity of the Church. Clement of Alexandria stated the basic principle for this unity: "There is only one Father of all... and there is only one virgin mother, whom I like to call the Church." [1] In the beginning this unity was a problem within the local church, where personal rivalries and squabbles tended to create groups and cliques which even the Apostles had to contend with. St. Clement of Rome, Pope, in his first letter to the Corinthians emphasizes charity as the basic principle of unity in the Church. [2] Similarly St. Ignatius of Antioch exhorts the people in the different churches to unity with obedience to the Bishop and the presbyterate, arguing from the unity of faith in the one Jesus Christ, Son of man and Son of God, [3] and the unity of the Eucharist they celebrate. [4] The Church is conceived as a mystical reality existing from the beginning of creation. [5] She is said to be the female principle of salvation along with Christ, the male principle, parallel to the male and female created by God in the beginning. [6] The Church is described also as the second Eve arising out of the side of the second Adam, Christ, sleeping on the Cross. [7]

The Trinitarian Mystery and the Church

The principal source of inspiration in ecclesiology was the conception of the mystery of the Trinity of God. Platonism and its emphasis of ideas and essences created an essentialist attitude to all reality. This created difficulties in understanding the mystery of the Trinity of persons that are subsistences of the existential order. Thus Sabellianism conceived the three Persons as mere modes of the one divine essence, while Arius from the same essentialist suppositions argued that the Son was of totally different essence from the Father, a mere creature. In answering Arius the Fathers of the Council of Nicea did not go out of that essentialist framework; they simply defined that the Son was

1. *Pedagogus* I, 6, 42, 1. *P. G.* 8, 300
2. St. Clement. I Cor. 49, 2
3. *Eph.* 20, 2. *P. G.* 5, 661
4. *Philad.* 3, 4; *PG.* 5, 700
5. Hermas. *Pastor* Vis 2, 4, 1. PG 2, 897
6. St. Clem. II Cor. 14, 2; Rouet. n. 105
7. St. Augustine, *Tract. in Jo.* 15, 8

homoousios of the same numerical essence with the Father. Though the divine Persons are distinct among themselves as hypostases they are identical with the one divine essence. The Oriental Fathers were forced to move out of this essentialist position on account of Eunomiansim which challenged the divinity of the Holy Spirit in spite of the homoousian definition. Hence the Council of Constantinople in 381 which was attended only by the Orientals shifted the emphasis to the distinct persons in the Trinity, each of whom possessed the whole divine essence in a specific way. Their main argument against the Eunomians was that if the person of the Holy Spirit was not really and truly God our divinisation by him would be false. Hence they devised the Trinitarian formula "From the Father through the Son to the Holy Spirit." The Latins who were not challenged by any such heresy and were not fully aware of what was happening in the East went on with their essentialist approach and introduced the famous "Filioque" in the creed, meaning that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son as if from a single principle of spiration without realizing that this reduction of the Father and the Son into a single principle was actually reducing them to the one divine essence.

In the essentialist theology of the Trinity the hypostatic identity of the Holy Spirit also suffered somewhat since in the Augustinian psychological conception. He is presented as the *nexus amoris*, the link of love, between the Father and the Son and as *signaculum Trinitatis*, a sort of seal of the Trinity. In this perspective his full hypostatic independence and personal fullness in the economy of salvation are lost sight of. Instead of recognizing the unique personal function of the Holy Spirit and the distinctive function of the Second Mission of divinising men and of making each one realize interiorly what the First Mission accomplished in human history for all men, the Holy Spirit is considered a mere means in the economy of the Word.

The Orientals have always pointed out with a certain amount of exaggeration the consequences of this loss in Trinitarian personalism in ecclesiology. The Church is viewed as an amorphous community of men impersonally grouped together and labelled the mystical Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is conceived as the soul of this body, the Spirit of Christ, the head sent into the

members. The leading theologian of this trend of thought is
St. Augustine: "What the soul is to the human body, the Holy
Spirit is to the body of Christ; what the soul does in all the
members the Holy Spirit does in the whole Church." [8] The dis-
advantage of this theory is that the Church as a community of
persons has no life of her own, but has to be moved and
animated by the Holy Spirit, as it were, from outside. It also
introduces the dualism of soul and body in the church. [9] As the
Orthodox theologian Lossky states with some exaggeration, the
essentialist approach to the Trinity produced an essentialist eccle-
siology too in which the People of God are subordinated to the
Mystical Body, charism to institution, interior freedom to external
authority, prophetism to juridicism, mysticism to scholastism, laity
to clergy, universal priesthood to ministerial hierarchy and finally
the episcopal college to the Pope. [10]

Eastern pneumatology and ecclesiology

The Eastern Church, on the other hand, was awakened to
the dangers of the essentialist approach by the Eunomian heresy
which, from the principles of essentialism, tried to show that the
Holy Spirit had only an inferior divinity. The Greek Fathers
especially the Cappadocians reacted by affirming the unique perso-
nality of the Holy Spirit who receives the fullness of the divinity
from the Father, the one *arche* or origin of both the Son and of
the Holy Spirit. For them Pentecost which represented the Mission
of the Holy Spirit was as important as the Incarnation, the
Mission of the Son. This primary emphasis placed on the distinct
divine Persons, each of whom possesses wholly the one and the
same divinity, enabled the Fathers to tell the faithful to address
their prayers not to the Son who is our High Priest, nor to the
Holy Spirit, our advocate, but only to the Father. [11] Thus the

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8. *Sermons.* 267, 4, 4; PL 38, 1231

9. cf. Cl. Dagens. "L'Esprit Saint et l'Eglise dans la con-
juncture actuelle" *Nouvelle Rev. Theol*; 96 (1974) 225-245

10. V. K. Lossky. "Essai sur la theologie mystique de
l'Eglise d'Orient.", Paris, 1944, pp. 155-156. 163, cited in
A. de Halleux, "Orthodoxie et Catholicism. du personalisme en
pneumatologie" *Rev. Theol. de Louv.* 6 (1975) 13-14.

11. Grigen. *On Prayer*

Church itself was conceived as a community of persons encountering the Trinity of God as three distinct persons.

Another important difference in Trinitarian theology which affected ecclesiology in the East is apophatism. Instead of trying to understand the mystery of the Trinity by transferring to God the psychological dialectics, as Augustine did, the Eastern Fathers generally took the mystical approach of interiorizing the three divine Persons by a certain withdrawal from the subject-object dichotomy of the rational approach. This is the positive side of the apophatic method. St. Ephrem suggests the same method of interiority in the approach to the Church: "Your soul is your bride, your body the bridal chamber, your guests are ideas and thoughts. If your single body can be a marriage feast to you, then how much more is the Church the wedding banquet in its fullness". [12] Only one who is mature in himself as a perfect person can encounter others as persons in the People of God. Origen speaks in the same vein when he describes the Church "as the temple built by the living stones of men". [13]

In this communion of men in the Church there is an analogy with the communion of angels: "When the saints are assembled together, there is a twofold Church present, that of men and that of angels."[14] The Oriental Fathers instead of speaking of the Church as an abstract and universal reality getting concretely realized in different places take a very realistic approach. What brings people together in the Church are the sacraments, especially those of Baptism and Eucharist. Theodore of Mopsuestia says: "Justly and rightly baptism is called also a new birth, because in this symbolic action done on us we are born through resurrection to eternal incorruptible life."[15] Through Baptism we are formed into one body in Christ not in an impersonal manner; "As Adam was called man, and each one of us, and all of us commune in this name, so also those who through spiritual re-

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12. *Hymns on Faith* 14, 5
13. Origen *In Matt.* 16, 21; PG 13, 1443.
14. Origen. *On Prayer* 31, 5
15. *In Jodn*, 17, 20

generation are as it were the Body of Christ are rightly called by the word 'Body'."[16] The water that flowed from the side of Christ on the Cross symbolizes Baptism and the blood the Eucharist.[17] The Church is the community of the disciples of Christ gathered around his Body, the Eucharist. Baptism is the Sacrament that admits members to this Eucharistic banquet. Other sacraments strengthen the bond of union among the members and assign special functions in the service of the Body of Christ.

For Origen and others this Eucharistic assembly is the source of strength in every individual church. "Paul says of the power of the Lord that is present in the Church, 'you being gathered together and my spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus' — as much as to say that the power of the Lord abided not only with the Ephesians but also with the Corinthians. If Paul, who was still clothed in the body, could think of himself as conveyed in his own spirit to Corinth, we should feel confident that the blessed ones who have departed from the body are present in spirit in the churches, and that perhaps even earlier than those who are still in the body." The Church is the locus where the Spirit acts to bring humanity together as the People of God. In every other situation men are brought together for the functions they play, for what they can actually contribute to others. In the community of the Church the Spirit brings people together for what they are, to commune with each other as free children of God. This is, in essence, the redemptive work accomplished by Christ, and which is being completed in the Church. As far as individuals are concerned this work is accomplished in the local Eucharistic community. What hurts most the work of human salvation is the hatred, jealousy and squabbles that destroy charity in the hearts of people and their harmony. St. Basil speaks at length on the state of dissension and heresy in his own church. St. Ephrem in his Hymns on Faith makes this prayer: "O Lord, make peace in my days in thy churches, and unite and bind together, O Lord, the warring sects, and calm and reconcile the disputing parties and out of all

16. *Ibid*.
17. *Ibid* 19, 34
18. On Prayer 31, 5

churches may there be a single Church of justice, and may she gather her children, the just in her womb in order to thank your goodness."[19]

Church as communion of Churches

Besides the salvation of individuals that is realized in and through the local Eucharistic community, the Church has another function, namely to bear a common testimony to the world concerning the universal salvific message of Christ. St. Ephrem compares this mission to the two horns Moses had in his camp: It was according to him an image of the Church which has to proclaim to the world the two testaments of the Bible the old and the new.[20] In this task of witnessing unity among the different local and particular churches for all the Fathers of both East and West. The Church of Christ should be united in one Lord, one Baptism and one faith. "Since there is only one Spirit, and one is the faith of the believers, the Word originating from the one community is addressed to many", says St. Hilary.[21] St. Cyprian has several analogies for this unity: "The Church expanded far into a multitude through the increase in her fecundity, is one, and just as there are many rays of the sun but only one light, many branches of a tree but only one strength based on the root, and from a single source flow many streams, so also though the number may appear diffused on account of its plenitude, unity is preserved in the source."[22] He even exaggerated the function of this unity to the extent of denying the validity of the sacraments in those churches separated from visible unity with the universal church.[23]

But there is a slight difference in the conception of this unity between the Western and Eastern Fathers. The basis of this unity for the Latin Fathers is the Holy Spirit that animates all the churches[24] and the apostolic succession which guarantees

19. *Hymn* 52, 15
20. *Hymns on Faith* 21, 10
21. *Tract. in Ps* 65, 20. PL 9, 432
22. *PL.* 4, 501.
23. PL 4, 336
24. *PL* 10, 259-261

the unity of faith.[25] For the Oriental Fathers the basis of unity is not a mere conformity in a fixed formula, but communion in diversity between the different churches. The principal argument for the truth of the Catholic faith proposed by St. Irenaeus against the heretics is that between the churches spread out through the world and founded by different apostles and their successors there is unanimity in the profession of faith.[26]

According to John Damascene the unity of the Church is a sequel not to her apostolicity but rather to her catholicity and universality.

It is not possible for the Catholic Church to be only apostolic. For the omnipotent power of the head who is Christ could save the whole world through the apostles. The holy catholic Church of God is the gathering of the holy Fathers who are from ancient times, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, martyrs, to whom should be added all the peoples who believe together. For they were seeing that people from all nations of men under the heavens have the same faith with the Christians. It is impossible, without the Holy Spirit, that this collection of universal and infinite languages should agree in the true opinion concerning faith. I say again, the Church is and is called catholic because she gathers together into one salvific faith and knowledge of God people of the most different customs, modes of behaviour and infinite languages.[27]

Hence the important aspect of the unity of the Church is not that all churches should be reduced to a unity of conformity in the same customs and the same external structures of government, but rather that all the churches in spite of their different traditions should be united in the same spiritual communion. The Church is essentially collegial at every level: it is a collegial communion of persons on the level of the local church and a communion of churches through the collegiality of their bishops. The sad fact is that the Oriental Churches in the Catholic communion, owing to the long Latin domination have lost all

25. *PL* 2, 32
26. *Adv. Haeres.* 3, 3, 1–4 PG 7, 848–851
27. John Damsc. PG 96, 1358

sense of collegiality. The Roman Curia and especially the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches deals with the various Oriental churches as more districts of ecclesiastical administration entrusted to it and with the Bishops as mere subordinate officials and Roman appointees. The Oriental Bishops, most of whom received a thoroughly Latin seminary training, are happy with having everything dictated to them from Rome since they can in turn dictate everything to those below them. Their sense of Canon Law even in matters of Liturgy, which is the prayer and worship of the People of God, is more rigid than that of the strictest Roman canonists. This state of affairs can be corrected only if Orientals regain their theological tradition concerning the fundamental mysteries of faith and in the light of it try to understand liturgical traditions and customs.

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The Communion of Churches according to Syro-Malabar Liturgical Traditions

Introduction

In this short discussion the aim is to bring out the idea of "Communion of Churches" as understood and celebrated in the tradition and liturgical texts of the Syro-Malabar Church. First the idea as such is probed and then it is compared with Malabar traditions. In contrast to the Western tradition, the East has always understood, respected and encouraged the plurality of Churches and traditions. The acceptance of other Churches as they are, whether of the Catholic communion or not, was a novelty to the Latin Church during the 50's and 60's. Still in Vatican II, it has been approved in principle. The recent address of Pope Paul VI, on the occasion of the 4th centenary celebration of the Pontifical Greek College, seems to be an open acceptance of this reality. In this document His Holiness says: "The existence of distinct traditions, institutions, rites and ways of ordering Christian life which, in use among the Eastern Churches, exist without contradiction, alongside the corresponding and yet different expressions that are characteristic of the Latin Church, is, in fact, wonderful and providential. We consider that on the foundation of unity of faith, and this something solid and immutable, it is not only legitimate, but also fortunate and inspiring to have a varied and convergent series of ritual and institutional differences. This phenomenon is an indication of vitality; it reveals riches and is a sign of a growth "ab intus", so that all flat and perhaps inopportune uniformity is overcome, and there is luxurious bloom".[1]

The Churches and the one Church of God in Christ

The basis for an authentic ecclesiology we have in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St. Paul. A thorough

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1. L'osservatore Romano, May 19, 1977, p. 3.

analysis of these scriptural texts will lead us necessarily to the "Church of God in Christ", concretely expressed as different Churches. They differ from one another in liturgical worship, spirituality, theology and administrative set-up.[2] It is not the number of faithful or the geographical size, but the apostolicity and the life-situation that determine the nature of an individual Church. The apostolicity depends on the original Christ-experience of its Apostle and the special authorization by Christ to share it with others. It is evident from St. Paul's preoccupation with establishing his apostolicity, through the Christ-experience and Christ's direct authorization on his way to Damascus (I Cor. 15, 3 ff). The Church, for St. Paul, is a fellowship of God's assembly, the assembly of the new covenant, constituted on the unique experience of the Risen Lord.

The uniqueness of "the Twelve" is that they were eye-witnesses to the "Christ-event". They were all living with the Lord and were really experiencing who He was. Although they were experiencing the same Lord, through the same event, their personal experiences were different. Their personal reactions at certain critical moments in the life of Christ explain clearly their experience with Him. The Holy Spirit who continued and perfected the work of Christ in them, also moved them according to their own specific Christ-experience. The impact they made among peoples also differed according to several causes – cultural, social, political, historical, geographical, psychological, economic and so on. Thus the different apostolic Christ-experiences shared with different peoples gave form to different Churches. All of them are equally Churches of God in Christ. So they have to recognize, respect and promote each other.

Still among the Churches of the Apostles, the community at Jerusalem and its leaders were given special authority and privileges because of its direct experience with the Risen Lord. St. Paul, who was very particular to show this respect for the Church that is in Jerusalem, never hesitated to accuse St. Peter, when he was guilty of hypocrisy and double-dealing in his relations with the Christian Gentiles (Gal. ch. 2). As St. Peter moved to Rome,

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2. UR., the Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II, nos. 15-17.

they began to attribute this speciality to the Church of Rome. Gradually the equality of other Churches was forgotten and Rome wanted to impose its authority over others. The tension so created was somehow, at least for the time being, solved in the Council of Constantinople in 879 - 880. It decreed: "Each church has certain ancient customs which it has received as its heritage. One should not quarrel or make dispute on that account. Let the Church of Rome observe its own way of doing things, this is legitimate. But let the Church of Constantinople also keep certain customs which have come to it from the distant past. Let it be the same in (other) Sees of the East.... Would not many things have been avoided if the Churches had followed this rule in the past"[3]. It is not mere toleration of other Churches that is enforced by the Council, but real appreciation and promotion. History repeated itself. Vatican II had to repeat and re-enforce all these together with new insights.

Other Churches and the Thomas Christians

According to various 16 th century documents, mostly Western, it is with the idea of co-existence and co-operation that the Thomas Christians of India made their first contacts with the Portuguese. They were then a well-established community, living their faith, which they had inherited from their Apostle, St. Thomas. They called it the "Law of Thomas", their special *style of Christian life*. It was different, both in its apostolicity and in its life-situation, from the Portuguese style of Christian life. The Thomas Christians called that the "Law of Peter", comparing it to their own Law. In spite of these differences, they were over-joyed at making contacts with them as their brethren in faith. They very well appreciated the Latin usages, their liturgical celebrations, canonical disciplines and so on. They were also conscious, it seems, of their own imperfections, especially in the matter of doctrine. Yet they never had the idea that the Latin or Western form of Christianity was the only true form; nor did they ever wanted to substitute it for their own. Their idea was that each apostolic Church has its own customs and practices, sometimes going back to the Apostles themselves. Such different customs or Laws are only decorations to the Universal Church, and expressions

3. MANSI, XVII, 489.

of the same Christ-experience. In short, in their contacts with the Portuguese, what the Thomas Christians wanted was co-existence and the good of both communities, while what the Portuguese wanted was absorption and that too of an ancient local community into a new-born foreign community.

Even before their contacts with the Portuguese, the Thomas Christians had acted in the same way with all other travellers, envoys or missionaries from other Churches. John de Marignoli, a Papal Legate to China, on his way back to Rome stayed 14 months at Quilon. Although he was staying there in the Church of St. George, of the Latin community, he was looked after, and entertained, by the Christians of St. Thomas. He himself testifies to this fact[4]. It is further substantiated, during the Portuguese period, by a letter written by Fr. Penteado, one of the zealous latinizers, to the King of Portugal in 1516-7. He writes: "The Christians of St. Thomas do not care for communication with the Portuguese, not because they are not happy that they are Christians as we are, but we are among them as the English and the Germans are among us. As regards their national customs, their will is corrupted by their priests who say that just as there were twelve Apostles, even so, they founded twelve customs"[5].

Communion of Churches in liturgical prayers

The Syro-Malabarians pray for all Churches, their faithful and heads during their liturgical celebrations. There are also occasions when the Church is seen as one, as the Church of God in Christ. It is fully in consonance with Pauline thinking (cfr. Gal, 1, 13 and 1, 22). One among the intentions announced during the *Karosutha* or "Proclamation Prayer" (which) is ordinarily a part of every Eucharistic celebration), is significant enough to reveal the whole mentality of this Church towards other Churches. It reads like this: "For peace, concord and welfare (Qûyâmmâ) of the whole world and *of all the Churches*,

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4. Cfr. G. T. Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore*, Trivandrum 1901, p. 9.
5. J. Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, Vol. V, p. 435.

we beseech You, O Lord". [6] This is the Catholic mentality [7] to recognize, accept, respect and promote the existence and equality of different Churches. The Malayalam text for Eucharistic celebration, which is an experimental text of course, published in 1968, has fallen away from this salutary and Catholic mentality of the Church, both in removing the word *welfare* (Qūyāmmā) from the 'Karosutha [8] and in not praying for other Churches in its Seasonal and fabricated 'Karosuthas' [9]. Moreover, the mentality expressed in the fabricated 'Karosuthas' of Seasons is quite contrary to the spirit and heritage of Oriental Churches of many examples, only one is quoted here. In the Season of Epiphany we read thus : "Confessing one Lord, one faith and one Baptism, (let us pray) that *all Christian Churches* and denominations may become *One*" [10]. This is not the mentality of the Syro-Malabar Church but that of the Pre-Vatican Latin Church. It is also contrary to the principles of Ecumenism enunciated by Vatican II. Let us accept other Churches as they are, and allow them to continue to make progress in their own way, not force them somehow to sacrifice themselves and to come to our own way. If there are basic dogmatic differences, let us sit together, discuss them openly and try to bridge the gap. As regards disciplinary laws, let each Church follow its own way. Unity is never uniformity or absorption of many into "the One".

Conclusion

The communion of Churches means mutual acceptance, co-existence and mutual help. Because of historical accidents and the exigencies of the modern man the different Churches are forced to mingle with others in several countries. In India itself we have three Churches of the Catholic communion and many others of our separated brethren. The different expressions of the

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6. The Text of the Eucharistic celebration of the Syro-Malabar Church, Alwaye 1962, pp. 11-12.

7. L'osservatore Romano, loc. cit.

8. The Text of the Eucharistic celebration of the Syro-Malabar Church, Alwaye 1968, p. 11.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-106.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

same faith makes beauty. Let each one of them make progress in its own way, being faithful to its own heritage, sharing it with anybody he likes. Let us not tie the Churches down to limited areas. That is not becoming of the Catholic mentality. Assimilation from other Churches is always healthy, but superficial and emotional aping because of an inferiority complex is suicidal. The Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches in India have to be very vigilant in this matter. Any attempt at Latinization or Westernization will tell upon all their efforts in the ecumenical field, especially because of their separated brethren, the Nestorian Church of Trichur and the Jacobite Church. To conclude with the Pope's words: "... modern researches aimed at examining the relations between the Gospel proclamation and human civilizations, between faith and culture, can find in the history of these (Oriental) Churches venerable and significant anticipations of conceptual elaborations and concrete forms with regard to this dual concept, unity and diversity"[11].

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11. L'Osservatore Romano, loc. cit.

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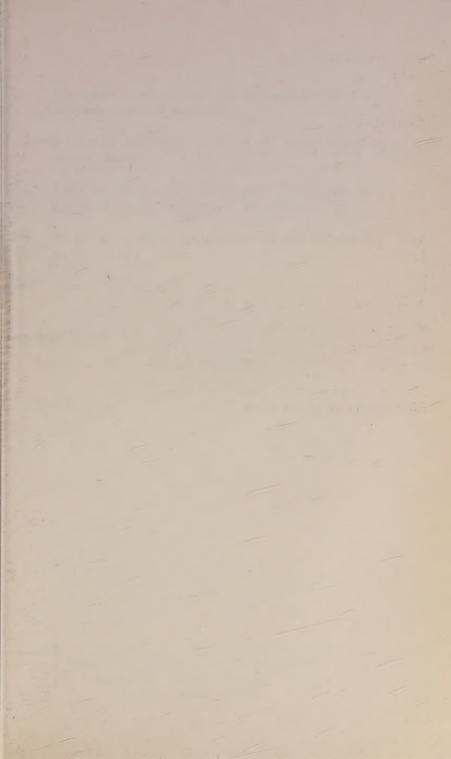
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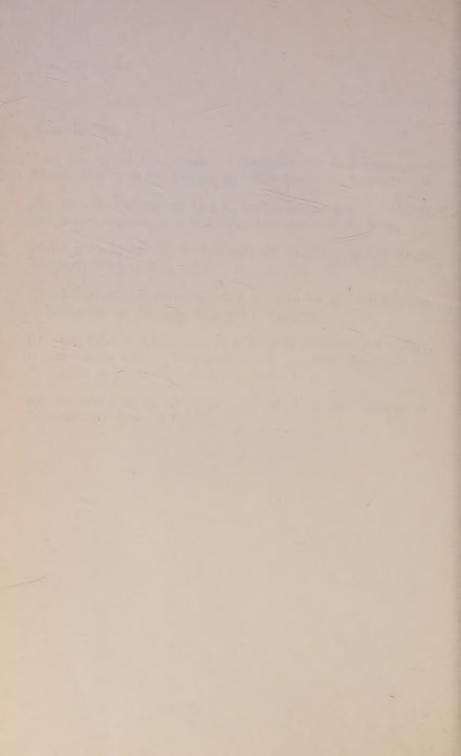
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